THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF HUNGER AND POVERTY IN HOUSTON

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUNGER HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD IN HOUSTON, TX, JUNE 6, 1986

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THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF HUNGER AND POVERTY IN HOUSTON

FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 1986

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUNGER,
Houston, TX.

The select committee met, pursuant to call, at 9 a.m., at the West End Multiservice Center, Building 3, 170 Heights Boulevard, Houston, TX, Hon. Mickey Leland (chairman) presiding.

Member present: Representative Panetta.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MICKEY LELAND, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Chairman LELAND. I want to thank you for joining us this morning as we investigate the causes and consequences of poverty and hunger in Houston. I extend the committee's gratitude to Ms. Peggy Wilson and her staff for arranging our use of this great facility.

More than being here to extract information on how widespread the hunger problem in Houston has become, the committee wants to draw a clear picture as to why so many of our citizens are without adequate resources to feed themselves and what kind of Federal, State, and local partnership we must forge to remedy this situation.

In June 1984, the Select Committee on Hunger began conducting field investigations of hunger and poverty across America. We visited soup kitchens where growing numbers of women and children come for meals; an intensive care ward where low-birthweight babies receive treatment; and private homes where people did not have food in their refrigerators and cupboards to feed their families. These experiences have forced me to face grim realities—realities about how extensive hunger is across this country, and today, how pervasive it is right here in my own hometown, Houston, TX.

Poverty and hunger are not strangers in Houston. I know; I grew up here. Historically, there are communities in this city which have been plagued by these conditions for decades. However, with every passing day, these problems are becoming more far-reaching. A whole new sector of the population is being forced into poverty.

They are called the "new poor," a group of people who prospered under Houston's economic growth. Reliance on public assistance programs never entered their minds. However, the decline in this once booming economy has now caused an epidemic of unemploy-

ment that has spread across this city like a brush fire. Skilled workers who were once earning good wages now have no jobs.

Because of scarce opportunities for retraining programs, there are few prospects for reentering the workplace at salaries which will cover their living expenses. Consequently, many have lost their homes to foreclosure or have been evicted. Whatever living arrangements they have managed, a vast number are still without adequate food.

Participation in Federal assistance programs is increasing at an alarming rate. In 1982, more than 54,000 Harris County residents were enrolled in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program [AFDC]. In January 1986, more than 80,000 people received monthly benefits.

Following this same trend, in 1982 average monthly participation in the Food Stamp Program was close to 152,000 persons. By January 1986, more than 197,000 persons were receiving benefits.

Even with assistance from both of these major antipoverty programs, benefits for a family of three assure an income which is only 55 percent of the federally designated poverty threshold. This is certainly not enough to provide basic necessities.

Consequently, private food and other emergency assistance providers have become inundated with pleas for help which far exceed their limits.

Networks of private nonprofit agencies which provide emergency food, utility payment, and rent assistance are not confined to what have been considered the poorer neighborhoods. They are cropping up across the city in attempts to meet the evergrowing demand.

The Houston Interfaith Hunger Coalition, a network of nonprofit emergency food providers was comprised of 65 agencies in 1983. At that time the pantries reported serving about 69,000 people.

In 1985, the coalition had grown to 104 member agencies; 204,000 persons were served. Last year, the Houston Food Bank distributed 7.5 million pounds of food in the Houston area. The director of the program reported that this is more food than had been distributed in the 3 previous years combined.

I applaud the efforts of the many food and other emergency assistance program operators in this city. I cannot imagine how devastated the lives of so many people in Houston would be without their support. I also commend the Texas legislature for its enactment of legislation designed to alleviate hunger throughout the State. The efforts of Senator Hugh Palmer, the sponsor of this bill, are to be applauded. However, these efforts alone will not suffice; more must be done.

Past investigations conducted by the select committee have clearly illustrated that existing assistance programs fall short in assuring freedom from poverty and hunger. The hunger problem here in Houston confirms these observations without question. I look forward to receiving from our witnesses today some insight as to how we can most successfully address these problems.

I now turn the floor over to my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from California, Representative Leon Panetta, chairman of the Select Committee's Task Force on Domestic Hunger.

I would like to note that Congressman Panetta is chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Con-

sumer Relations, and Nutrition, and as such, he has crafted what I predict will be landmark legislation. This bill is the Hunger Relief Act that has already been introduced in the Congress. I have co-sponsored this proposal and will be active in waging the campaign for its enactment.

Under his leadership we have successfully defended the food stamp and other nutrition programs which have been most vital to the survival and comfort of those people who would otherwise go hungry in this country.

I am most happy to introduce this friend who has taken extraordinary steps to be here this morning, Leon Panetta.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LEON E. PANETTA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you very much. It is a real pleasure to have the opportunity to come here to Houston and in particular, to join my friend, Mickey Leland, in these hearings.

I would say to those of you here in Houston, Mickey is a real leader on this issue as chairman of the select committee. This is not the kind of issue that draws alot of public attention, usually because it is not like arms control and it is not like dealing with the defense budget and it is not like dealing with a number of other issues.

Yet, it is so important to the security of our country because the fact is that if people go without food, if we have increasing hunger problems in this country, we truly damage the national security of the United States of America.

So for that reason, people like Mickey and others who are interested in this issue and continue to focus public attention on it, it is extremely important to what our Nation is all about.

So I pay tribute to many and also thank you for having me down here. Houston is, I am sure, no different from the many other cities that we have gone to throughout this country and we have been doing these hearings now on a regular basis I think over the last 4 years in an effort to find out the answer to this question, Is there hunger in America?

The result of all those hearings whether it is Montgomery, Cleveland, Detroit, San Francisco, Boston, or here in Houston is that America doesn't have to ask the question anymore, Is there hunger?

The question is, What are we going to do about a very serious problem of hunger in our society? That is really the question. And so I am sure in trying to listen to the testimony today we will have to look at what the answers are to what is a growing problem in AmoMrica.

What we are seeing is that hunger remains a consistent problem in a nation where we have an overwhelming agricultural bounty, and it is hard to understand why hunger is a problem.

I think one of the reasons is it takes place on another side of America, a lot of people don't pay attention to that other side of America.

They don't see soup kitchens on a daily basis. They don't see food pantries, don't talk to the people who are having problems. So it is another side of America.

The result is a tendency to believe that somehow there really isn't a problem, except one of education, as the President stated.

If the problem is not knowing where the benefits are, why are there something like 7 million women who qualify for the WIC Program—women, infants, and feeding program—who are not getting the benefits because there are just not the resources to meet the need.

That is not ignorance on the part of the women who qualify for that program. It is a lack of resources.

The other part of it is economic. That is, in large measure, what you are seeing here in Houston. Economic changes, the economic roller coaster ride from community to community, varies a great deal and the problem with the programs that are provided is that they really don't—they are not flexible enough to deal with these economic downturns.

In Houston, you have a very good example of the economic problem. You have had a dramatic impact from the swings in the price of oil. We had the same problem in the Midwest with agriculture. Agriculture is virtually suffering the worst depression since the Great Depression.

Although there is a beginning move to move up from it, the fact is that that downturn severely impacted large numbers of families who suddenly had nowhere to turn. When they went to a food stamp program or some other food benefit program, they didn't qualify for whatever reason.

They couldn't get immediate assistance. So what did they have to do? They had to resort to food pantries or soup kitchens or whatever they could to find sufficient food for themselves.

The same, as I said, is true here in Houston. If you look at what has happened with benefits, for example, unemployed workers in Texas are now eligible for a maximum of 26 weeks of unemployment compensation.

Prior to 1981, unemployed workers were eligible for up to 32 weeks of benefits in those States. So that has made the situation even worse.

In Texas, as in many other States, Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC] benefits continue to lag behind inflation significantly. The lag is so great that even though food stamp benefits have been indexed to the cost of food since 1972, combined food stamp and AFDC benefits have been declining in terms of purchasing power.

So what happened is that a family with a combined AFDC and food stamp benefit for a family of four in Texas, for example, purchasing power declined 28 percent between 1972 and 1984 in terms of actual purchasing power.

So even the benefits provided to those who are impacted by unemployment, or a recession, or other events, are receiving dramatically lower benefits compared to what they would have been receiving.

The Food Stamp Program, because it is indexed, carries a double load. Food stamps do not just provide nutrition assistance, they have become almost a form of income supplement.

So the question is, How do we try to deal with some of these problems? It is not easy. Over the last 5 years about $12 billion has been cut from nutrition programs—$12 billion.

People wonder if these programs have been reduced. They have been reduced severely.

I think actually nutrition programs carry the bulk of the cut burden in those first years: $8 billion out of the Food Stamp Program, $4 billion out of a series of other programs. So they have been reduced significantly.

What we are trying to do now is restore some of those benefits in some key areas that have impacted on people the most.

With the help of Mickey and a number of others, we were able last year to provide in the farm bill some additional benefits in the Food Stamp Program.

It was passed by the House, passed by the Senate, and signed by the President. So some of those benefit increases are now in effect. But there is much more that needs to be done. That is why we introduced the Hunger Relief Act.

Senator Kennedy, Mickey Leland, and I have introduced this bill. The bill, I hope, will solve some of the problems we will see here in Houston.

For example, we want to provide an increase in the assets test. Such an increase was recommended by the President's own Commission on Hunger so that people who are impacted by immediate unemployment have some access to these benefits in the short term.

We would also try to do something for the poor by increasing the benefit levels. Right now the average cost of a meal is projected to be 52 cents per meal in the Food Stamp Program in fiscal year 1987. Fifty-two cents. What we would like to do is add 3 cents—not much—but it would make a big difference for people who are in need. The increase for elderly households with a medical deduction would be 7.4 cents. The increase for households with a shelter deduction would be 6.7 cents.

We also try to provide increases for Child Nutrition Programs, also increases for the WIC Program which is one of the most effective programs at the Federal level in the nutrition area.

And we also tried to provide nutrition assistance itself to help people make better decisions about what happens in the nutrition area.

Let me conclude by saying we have been through a period where a great deal of attention was paid to hunger with the Hands Across America event. Those events are important.

We are a media-oriented society, so it is important that people join together in an expression of compassion about the problems of hunger.

But Hands Across America doesn't mean very much if we in the Congress can't deliver on the programs that need to be improved, that, in effect, do the most to help the hungry in this country.

While it was nice that everybody joined hands and expressed their concern about hunger, I hope that expression of concern will

flow to Washington in a continuing legislative, lobbying effort to make sure that the Congress responds to this problem.

I think we can do that. We are going to fight to do that and I am anxious to hear the testimony here that I think will convince us more than anything that action needs to be taken and this is not a matter of just words, it is a matter of deeds.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Panetta appears at the conclusion of the hearing, see p. 42.]

Chairman LELAND. Thank you very much. Now you understand why I am so proud that Leon could be with us today.

When we have reduced Federal funding for the kinds of programs we will address here today to the extent that we have, we have to depend many times also on the efforts of local governments to make up the losses.

Today we have with us the mayor pro tem of the city of Houston who has graciously honored us with his presence.

Let me say that I am most proud that he would come today because, quietly, in his own way, he has done so much over the years to help poor people, particularly those identified as hungry people.

I think this committee is very much privileged to have him come to give us whatever his words of wisdom are today.

STATEMENT OF JUDSON ROBINSON, MAYOR PRO TEM, CITY OF HOUSTON, TX

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you very much, Mickey.

I would add how pleased we are about your continuing concern about people in Houston and throughout the world that you have invited the chairman of the Select Committee's Domestic Task Force, Leon Panetta, probably one of the brightest young men that we have had the pleasure of watching on television in this past several years since we have been lucky enough to get cable in Houston.

We admire you for the stands that you take, especially as relates to the stands you take for people who are less fortunate than we are. We recognize how important it is to take that position with respect to hunger.

Our city, like so many cities throughout America, are going through serious times. Even the city of Houston is contemplating laying off some 750 people which will add to the problems that we are talking about today, and that is hunger.

I know that with your leadership and with Mickey's leadership that our answers and our concerns about hunger can be met and I appreciate the fact that the committee has chosen to come to Houston.

I know Mickey did a lot of armtwisting to get you guys down here, but however we did it to get you here, we are pleased.

We want to have you know that the city of Houston is open for suggestions and recommendations on things that your committee feels will help implement the concerns that we share here and on behalf of all of us we want to say welcome to Houston and thanks for having your hearing here in our city.

We appreciate it.

Chairman LELAND. Thank you very much, Mayor Pro Tem Robinson. Please convey to the mayor that we understand that she had prior commitments and could not be here, but she was well represented and the entire city council, as a matter of fact, was well represented.

We appreciate that.

Mr. ROBINSON. Thank you, sir.

Chairman LELAND. I would like to call forth our first panel of witnesses, Mr. Bart Walker and Mr. Don Horn.

Mr. Walker is a former employee of the ARMCO Steel plant. Mr. Horn is another of my good friends. He is executive secretary of the Harris County AFL–CIO; chairman of the United Fund Campaign in Houston; and executive director of the Harris County AFL–CIO community services program.

Gentlemen, will you please come forward and take your seats at the witness table.

You may proceed.

STATEMENT OF DON HORN, SECRETARY-TREASURER, HARRIS COUNTY AFL–CIO

Mr. HORN. In behalf of the labor movement we commend the committee for coming to Houston and for holding these extensive hearings throughout the country. I think this hearing today coming after Hands Across America should be further demonstration to the Reagan administration that the American people really care and they want some action to help the hungry, the homeless, and the unemployed.

To those of us in Houston, this hearing comes at a time in our community when we are going through some difficult times. Unemployment is higher now than it has been for years, and more layoffs and more cutbacks are to be anticipated.

For those getting laid off, unfortunately, there is not much hope here in the job market.

I know, because the AFL–CIO operates a program for dislocated workers and it is difficult to find any jobs. The few there are are at the $5 an hour rate or less. What that does for somebody who has been working under contract, Congressmen, where the wage rates were $10–$12 an hour, plus health insurance, paid vacations, pension plans, that comes to about a two-thirds cut in the family income. Not only is it demoralizing, but it is economically impossible.

To compound the problem, there is precious little in the way of retraining funds for those thousands of laid-off workers. Incidentally, most of these workers are being laid off through no fault of their own.

Yesterday, Exxon announced some 6,200 people have taken voluntary leave of that company. These are productive workers who have worked all their lives and now, all their savings are gone, and they must resort to whatever public assistance may be available.

In this transition from being self-sustaining to unemployed, there is another tragedy taking place. These people are losing their homes which most have struggled for all their lives and with it

they lose their dignity and self-respect. This is much worse than just losing your money.

Entire families are going through a nightmare, and it carries a social price of the breakup of the family unit. We see the ravages of this every day, and see the anger and frustration of people who want to work and can't find a decent job, or in the most cases, any job.

For the past 2 years, in order to assist our own members and the others in need, our organization applied for and secured a contract with the Texas Department of Human Resources to distribute surplus U.S. Government food supplies to those who meet the eligibility standards.

We have learned that the 5 percent of cost reimbursement for transportation and delivery of these foods, will be curtailed due to a cut back in Federal funds.

I was advised yesterday that the Texas Department of Human Resources Board instructed the administration of their program to find a way to put some of the funding back in. While this won't affect our effort because we don't charge for disbursements, it will dramatically affect most all the other groups and agencies that deliver the bulk of this food to the poor. I have discussed this problem with a number of these agencies, trying to find a solution.

We are looking for one, but we haven't found one yet.

As you know, I have served on the board of the United Way for a number of years, and recently, because of the layoffs, the United Way expects a shortfall of $3.5 million from what was pledged last year. At the same time, there has been a 19-percent increase in assistance requests from the United Way agencies.

This is also happening at a time when our city is facing severe budget cuts as is the State government.

For the poor and the unemployed, they have nowhere to turn.

Through Houston Metropolitan Ministries, a United Way agency, there is a network of church-sponsored pantries. I know my own church participates. These are for emergency food needs. The demand on these pantries now is so great that many of them run out of food.

Our organization, the AFL-CIO, has cooperated with Channel 13 in their "Share Your Christmas" drive each year. We provide in excess of over 100 volunteers to help collect, sort, load, and unload all the donated staples. This past Christmas, the drive was successful in getting 400,000 pounds of food donated. However, the need was so great, all the food was gone within 2 days.

This is further evidence of the magnitude of the problem, and is beyond the ability of the local community to meet this problem. But then hunger and homelessness is not a problem just in Houston, though it has become acute here because of the economy.

We are paying and we will pay a heavy price for people going hungry. No, not in a sense of people starving to death, but going hungry in a real sense, going without an adequate diet for extended periods. This price of malnutrition will show up in higher health costs, poorer educational standards for children, and, for the elderly, a much reduced standard of life.

You know we can measure how much it costs for food stamps and other forms of public assistance. We don't have a good way to

measure the cost for people going hungry and malnourished. I suggest to you that the cost for not providing for the hungry and homeless is far greater than if we did a decent job.

You all need to take the message back to Washington. Feeding hungry people and housing homeless people should be a priority for our Nation. The President needs to understand that most of these people want to work, but there are few jobs.

Public assistance, at best, is mighty little and a person has to damn near beg to get it. He also needs to know that the magnitude of this problem is far beyond the ability of the voluntary agencies like the United Way or Hands Across America, so the Federal Government, and, yes, the Federal Government has a responsibility to its people and should lead the way in helping.

Something needs to happen before our society is divided by the haves and the have-nots.

I hear people say over and over, "We send billions to foreign nations; why can't we help at home?"

A pretty good question.

I will be glad to respond to any questions.

Let me make a couple off-the-cuff comments.

As you know, I served on the hospital district board of managers for 10 years. I am no longer on there, thank goodness. What happens during a down economy like this when people are malnourished, they get sicker quicker, they stay under health care longer, the public agencies, like the hospital district, pick up an abnormal additional burden for the fact that people come to them malnourished, sicker than they would have been had we had a decent standard of living and food for people.

The other thing that happens is people are laid off and it means we lose the group health insurance. Themselves, their wives, and their children are affected.

This puts another burden on the volunteer agencies. Obviously, you don't feel the effect of the lack of adequate health care until down the road—maybe 2 years, 5 years, 10 years down the road; but we will pay the price for that, too.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Horn appears at the conclusion of the hearing, see p. 44.]

Chairman LELAND. Thank you very much, Mr. Horn.

Let me ask Mr. Walker to proceed with his testimony.

STATEMENT OF BART WALKER, JR., PRIVATE CITIZEN

Mr. WALKER. All right.

I have a little bit here to say about what I have experienced, both working at ARMCO, and what happened since I left ARMCO Steel.

On July 19, 1973, I went to work for ARMCO Steel after graduating from high school in May of that same year. I began as a laborer making $3.63 an hour, until October 1973.

I was accepted into the apprenticeship and my pay escalated to over $5 per hour. Every 6 months, providing I passed my classwork, and on-the-job training, I would receive a raise in pay throughout the 4 years of training.

In 1977, I completed my apprenticeship and became a first-class millwright journeyman. My gross yearly salary at this time climbed to over $20,000 per year.

On top of my salary, I had an excellent health benefits plan, all I had to do when I went to the hospital was show my Blue Cross-Blue Shield card, and my entire hospital bill would have been paid.

I also had dental and optical insurance while I was working there. As time went on, my salary grew until it reached a point where, without working any overtime, I would gross in excess of $30,000 per year, and if I chose to work overtime, I had the opportunity to make $35,000 to $40,000 a year, or more, depending on my ability to withstand the long hours and lack of rest.

During the last year that I was at ARMCO, I was put on short 4-day workweeks. That was in November 1982. I had grossed over $27,000 when I was put on temporary layoff status.

Had I been able to work full weeks, I would have grossed around $35,000, with an opportunity for a minimum amount of overtime, I could have easily reached $40,000 that year.

Since losing my job at ARMCO, I have attempted to use my trade with other employers, which did not work out because I was trained for maintenance on certain types of equipment, old equipment, in an old plant which actually was built prior to World War II.

I worked on one job for 4 months, until I was required to run a new electrical circuit about which I knew nothing, nor had had any training, and I was told to recharge a refrigeration system with Freon, and I couldn't do that, so I was fired.

I went to work 2 weeks later, for a construction company as a millwright for 6 weeks. I had no experience in construction, only in maintenance. So, the leader man told me to follow the lead of an experienced construction millwright.

I did as the leader man told me, and when the experienced man fouled up, we were both fired.

At that time, as before, I felt so disoriented I really didn't know which way to turn, so I considered retraining for a new field. I went to junior college and took two courses in computer science.

I just passed one by the skin of my teeth, and made a C average in the other one. After talking with one instructor, I decided to give it one more try, so I took one more course, and became so disgusted that I dropped the class.

Then a friend of mine talked me into giving life insurance sales a try. I poured everything in me into trying to make this work. I went to a lot of expense, passed my exam and became licensed and pursued this field for 3 years.

I made some sales, I was able to scratch together a small income, but I could never make enough to live comfortably. On top of this, I was working in the more dangerous parts of town, where incomes were low, and the crime rate was high.

To top it all off, the atmosphere in the office was becoming unbearable, I was a newlywed, working 18 hours a day, and bringing home about $150 a week. So, I quit that job in October 1985, and haven't been able to find work that I am suited for since that time.

On top of the anxiety, depression, fear, the insecurity and feeling of worthlessness, I have put on about 150 pounds of weight since

1982. I now weigh about 350 pounds, I have no income, no medical insurance, and employers will not hire me, and I feel that the state of my mental health is diminishing.

All that I hear from people whose lives have been unaffected by the losses of these jobs and lifestyles is, work is out there, go find a job. I say to those people, walk in my shoes for 4 years, like my past 4 years have been, and then judge me.

I tried just recently to see if I was eligible to receive food stamp assistance, and was told I could not have over $1,500 in assets to be eligible. Well, I have considerably more than that. I just don't have any money, because all my savings is gone, on top of that, what I have I can't sell because no one will buy real estate right now.

If I could sell it, I would have to take a loss, if I take a loss, that means all that I have worked for and dreamed about was for nothing. And why should my dreams for the future and my hopes for my family be any less than those of others?

I don't need pity, I don't need crumbs from the table of life so I can be a substandard or second-class citizen. I need and want a good job, so my wife and I may start a family and together, we may all sit up to the table of life and get our fair share of what life has to offer.

That is all I have.

Chairman LELAND. Mr. Walker, thank you very much for your testimony. It was very moving, and we appreciate your coming forward to present this kind of testimony. It is a personal witness account of your own life, and I know that is sometimes very difficult, particularly in the public domain.

But it is most helpful to us in a hearing like this, because this is the message that we like to take back to Washington, to let our colleagues know as well as the administration, as Mr. Horn has admonished us to do, and we certainly wish you well in the years to come.

Let me just ask you a few questions about your personal situation.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Chairman LELAND. You are married?

Mr. WALKER. Yes.

Chairman LELAND. Is your wife working?

Mr. WALKER. She is working now. Making $4 an hour. She is working part time.

Chairman LELAND. What kind of work does she do? Is she a technician or——

Mr. WALKER. No; she is a sales clerk for Montgomery Ward.

Chairman LELAND. You don't find that sufficient to live on?

Mr. WALKER. Not hardly.

Chairman LELAND. Is she supporting both of you or do you have any kind of income at all?

Mr. WALKER. At this time, I have no income. She is supporting the both of us.

Chairman LELAND. You talked about assets that you have, you have real estate holdings, I understand?

Mr. WALKER. Yes, I do.

Chairman LELAND. You do have a car and things like that?

Mr. WALKER. I have a 1978 model Ford pickup, and she has a 1980 Pontiac Grand Prix, so between the two of us, we go well over the $1,500 mark.

Chairman LELAND. Are those all paid for?

Mr. WALKER. Yes, they are.

Chairman LELAND. What other kinds of expenses do you incur over the—on a monthly basis?

Mr. WALKER. Well, we have, of course, our utilities, our car insurance, gasoline bills for carrying her back and forth to work, of course, the gasoline bills that I run up looking for work, our food expenses.

We have not had a problem ourselves with finding enough food to eat. Our problem has been more or less being able to pay our monthly bills, like the utilities. We are not able to make any major purchases.

I would like the opportunity to buy a new truck, dependable form of transportation, but there is just no way.

Chairman LELAND. Do you have problems with the old truck?

Mr. WALKER. The old truck is broken down, all the fluid reservoirs leak, the engine oil, transmission, power steering, it is just broken down.

Chairman LELAND. You have a home. Are you paying rent?

Mr. WALKER. No; I own a mobile home on a lot, and that is where we live. It is an old mobile home. If I had my way and had my income continued as it was, I had intended to build a home on that lot and take that mobile home out, but as it is, we are stuck in the old mobile home, which is falling down around us at this time.

Chairman LELAND. You are not eligible to receive any benefits from the programs that would supplement your income or afford you the opportunity to—you suggested that you tried to get food stamps and you are just not eligible because of your assets?

Mr. WALKER. Right.

Chairman LELAND. Have you gotten any assistance at all? I understand you may have appealed to the TEFAP and gotten some help with food commodities, surpluses?

Mr. WALKER. The only thing I have received was when our local union was passing out the cheese, the onions, the butter and things of that nature, and I was able to get a portion of that.

I think that was about 2 years ago, and if I am not mistaken——

Chairman LELAND. You said you had a problem with your weight, you have gained 150 pounds.

Mr. WALKER. That is correct.

Chairman LELAND. Because probably due to some kind of problems with your frustration and——

Mr. WALKER. Well, while I was working at ARMCO, I was forced to maintain a certain weight in order to be able to work out there. But I have had a weight control problem, and I was able to go receive medical assistance in order to keep my weight down.

Now that I have no medical insurance or anything of that nature, then I don't have the availability of assistance like I had before.

Chairman LELAND. So you have not been able to go to a doctor to get any assistance?

Mr. WALKER. That is right.

Chairman LELAND. Have you not found a doctor that would provide free service of some kind or some affordable service that you may be able to pay over a long period of time?

Mr. WALKER. No, I haven't. I recently visited my surgeon who did the gastric stapling on my stomach, which caused me to lose weight, and the stapling in my stomach has opened up now, because of complications. That is what caused me to gain weight back.

To go back and have the operation again, we are looking at approximately $6,000. This was the approximate cost of the operation in 1979. There is no way for that.

Chairman LELAND. Thank you, Mr. Walker.

Let me ask Mr. Horn a few questions, if I can. I know time is of the essence here, but, Mr. Horn, have you determined how private contributions to your program have been affected since the downturn in the economy of Houston?

Mr. HORN. Strikingly. Last year, United Way did a superb job in contributions. We broadened the base, but about that time, we had a new goal, but layoffs took place, and most of the contributors are on a monthly contribution arrangement, and thousands of them were laid off.

We said we would just be about $3.5 million short, and we had notified all the agencies about the cutbacks. We are swimming against the tide. I think the worst is yet to come.

Struggle as the volunteers do, and most of them have done a heck of a good job, the magnitude of the problem is just beyond their capacity to do it. There is no way you can do it.

There are a couple of TV stations that try, Channel 13 is successful. Their program attacks your conscience at Christmas time, and there is this outpouring of food. I always have to ask, though, what happens the week after that or 2 weeks after that?

On the other hand, these all help fill in some gaps. It is like Hands Across America, you raise the conscience level. I think the difference is we don't see the urgency of the hunger as compared to how this Nation responded to the problems in Ethiopia. But it was so dramatic, you see some child starving to death through TV.

In this country, they don't see that. If you want to see hungry people, come out to the east end every morning, people living outside. Fortunately, the weather is OK now, you see people eating out of garbage cans literally.

But we don't see it, because we are a media-conscious Nation, and if the media doesn't concentrate on it, we don't see it. We hear about it, but we don't see it visually. It doesn't really grab people.

I guess the experience we have every month is we distribute this surplus food, mostly cheese and butter, and the fact is that someone would damn well have to stand in line for about an hour to get a little cheese and butter.

Most of them are mad, they are frustrated, they are humiliated to have to go through that. A lot of them don't apply for it because their dignity won't allow them. They have been self-sustaining all their lives, and I guess they would rather go hungry than stand in line and get it.

I don't blame them. They are mad. I had one old fellow who told me he lives in the back of his pick-up truck and eats cheese and

butter every night. The program is not consistent. You never know month to month what you will get. Some months you get beans, some months you get rice, some months butter and cheese.

Many people depend on these programs. They are not adequate, but it keeps you from going hungry. Hopefully, the Tax Department and Human Resources will find a way to help. But here is the State having to bail the Federal Government out.

Chairman LELAND. Let me ask you, do you have enough surplus commodities on a monthly basis to distribute to the people in need?

Mr. HORN. What happens is the line gets longer every month, so we try to anticipate that by ordering more, you know. This food you got to take back if you don't use it the next day.

We do a balancing act trying to see how many people will be in that line, but every month the line gets longer. We don't anticipate it, but it is word of mouth; people spread the word. They go over and get free cheese and butter. Everybody has to fill out the application and sign it and meet the standards.

I would suggest to you, the economy, the way it is going, the line is going to get longer and longer.

Chairman LELAND. How many people like Mr. Walker do you see?

Mr. HORN. The bulk of the people we see now are people who have been self-sustaining and employed all their lives. There is a mixture. A lot of elderly people. There is a good number of women with small children.

But I guess about 50 percent are people that were people who were employed and had jobs, were self-sustaining themselves. These are the angry people. These are the people that believed that welfare was a big ripoff until they tried to get it themselves.

Now they are mad about it. They didn't know you had to go through all the redtape. They didn't know if your car was worth so much you couldn't get food stamps or if you had savings you couldn't get it.

Before you meet the guidelines you get so far down in the ditch you can't get out. If you get a little job they pull the rope away so you can't get out of the ditch.

So, there is a certain madness that goes on with it. It is a tremendous pressure on family units that go through this. It is a wrenching of people. I know the counseling services have a great demand.

Chairman LELAND. The gentleman from California.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you, Mickey.

Mr. Horn, let's look at a year ago. What was the economy like in this area?

Mr. HORN. It has gotten progressively worse. Unemployment figures are going up since a year ago.

If you compared it with 5 years ago, it is a totally new world in this city. People were moving in. It was a boom town.

Now, 25,000 people are going to move out of Houston, according to a newspaper story. I know I go out around the port area and we have workers who work down there and, Congressman, you know, where Clinton Drive and that area is out there.

Building after building, these warehouses are vacant. It is a sign of the economy, what is happening. These are people's employment

that have been decent jobs for years. So, it has really gotten very difficult.

Mr. PANETTA. Is that in large measure due to what happened in the oil prices?

Mr. HORN. That is one reason, and it is part of a combination. The tonnage at the ports is down dramatically. Manufacturing is off. The import problem is the problem. Oil, fuels a lot of the industries here, all the major manufacturers. It is a ripple effect, and they have all been hurt.

These are all the good jobs we had. These are the $10, $12, to $14 an hour jobs that are gone and won't come back.

Mr. PANETTA. How long have you been involved in the food distribution?

Mr. HORN. We got into it about 2½ years ago. Our organization did so because of the need of our own members plus our Community Services Program was in it and we had trouble getting certification for it, but we finally got it.

We did it. We don't charge the Government anything for the transportation. We do it on our own.

Mr. PANETTA. I understand.

Do you know the number of people you serve under your program?

Mr. HORN. I can tell you last year we distributed something like 480,000 pounds of food.

Mr. PANETTA. The entire year?

Mr. HORN. Yes. Our program was developed through the Community Services Program.

Mr. PANETTA. Can you give me a sense, if you looked at it a year ago and if you looked today, if you went to the same food pantries and service lines. What is the difference? How much more are you seeing?

Mr. HORN. I think the need has gone up dramatically.

Mr. PANETTA. Is it level?

Mr. HORN. Plus food stamps; our community service staffs are referring people. There is an increase in the number of people getting into the system. It just backs up and backs up.

There was a case a week ago, of an emergency case, really. A woman didn't get her bus on time, and was 15 minutes late in getting to the food stamp office, so she missed her window application, and they said, "You got to wait 2 weeks or a month to come back." When you are hungry and you miss your appointment by 15 minutes and it is not their fault—they just got so many applicants.

Mr. PANETTA. If you looked at it, say 6 months ago or 1 year ago, and went to the same place today, are you looking at double, triple, quadruple?

Give me some sense of the volume problem that is there.

Mr. HORN. Much worse. I can't put a figure on it, but it is much worse. You should have somebody from the Texas Department of Human Resources. I know their staff is tremendously overloaded, and I guess any one of the centers you go to, you will find people standing waiting in line and in a back up.

The State is short of funding because we have a critical budget crisis here.

Mr. PANETTA. As far as I know, your program has not asked for the Federal reimbursement.

Mr. HORN. No, we don't ask for any.

Mr. PANETTA. What is the reason for that?

Mr. HORN. Well, we just don't do it. We do it with our volunteers and own trucks. We have a couple of employers that donate refrigerator trucks, and, frankly, we don't want to be subservient to the Federal Government.

It is independence on our part to tell you the truth.

Mr. PANETTA. I can understand that.

With the cutback in the transportation thing and the fact is those that do depend on that reimbursement will be hurt badly. That is one of the efforts we are making now to try to restore that.

Mr. HORN. Frankly, I am glad we did that, because if we had and they would have cut the money, we would have been in trouble.

Mr. PANETTA. On the issue of the cost impact, I just want to mention, I agree with you.

I think one of the problems we always have is people say you shouldn't spend money on nutrition programs, but I will give you just one example of one study done in the WIC Program which found that for every dollar spent in that program on prenatal care, we saved $3 in health care costs. The savings occurred because women who received proper nutrition had healthy babies.

You don't get good nutrition, then you have children that need additional care in the hospital or they are born with disabilities or they are poor in terms of their educational capability, and so we wind up paying for it.

Mr. HORN. Pay more. It is like the old Fram filter ad—you pay me now or pay me much more later.

I think there is a direct parallel. We don't have a good way to measure the cost of not providing for people.

When I served on the hospital board, we had this argument about the neighborhood clinic. You could tell how much it cost to run them, but you couldn't measure how much it saved by having a facility where you could get people in for early care, where you could arrest their medical problems.

We couldn't measure that other than you measure in human suffering, but I know the cost is much greater.

Mr. PANETTA. No question.

Mr. Walker, how do you answer the question, if somebody says to you, "Look, why don't you just go out and get a job someplace?" What is your answer to that?

Mr. WALKER. I tell them all that has happened to me over the last 4 years, while either working or looking for a job.

I explain that I go to an employer, I fill out an application, I ask for an interview. I may or may not get a response at that time. If I do, I usually get a real good lookover. People look at me, see my size, and at that point they usually, as it has been in the past, say, "Well, this fellow, he is pretty big, you know. He may not be as good an employee as someone who may be a little smaller."

So, I have that to face along with the other problems. I was stable in my job at ARMCO. I lost a great deal when I lost that job.

I don't know if I will ever regain it.

Mr. PANETTA. How old are you?

Mr. WALKER. Thirty.

Mr. PANETTA. Do you have any children?

Mr. WALKER. No, sir, I don't.

Mr. PANETTA. You wife earns what, $4 an hour?

Mr. WALKER. Yes, sir.

Mr. PANETTA. That is your sole source of income?

Mr. WALKER. Yes.

Mr. PANETTA. You don't get any kind of benefits, no food stamps, no other benefits?

Mr. WALKER. No, sir.

Mr. PANETTA. You're basically, then, paying utilities, paying all your expenses, based on your wife's income?

Mr. WALKER. Yes, sir. Like I say, our homeowner's insurance, car insurance, our fuel bills, our utilities, food, things of that nature. Four dollars an hour doesn't always meet it. The ends don't come together.

Mr. PANETTA. What are you looking at down the road? What kind of future are you looking at? You can't continue to operate on that basis, can you?

Mr. WALKER. No, I can't. I had hoped that sometime in the future I would be able to find a source of income. I was well on my way to forming my own business when I lost the job at ARMCO. I wanted to either open up a small private business on my property in the country or go into farming; one or the other.

Of course, you have stated yourself the situation in the farm economy, so you know where I am hurting there.

Mr. PANETTA. So, it doesn't look too good down the road.

Mr. WALKER. No, it doesn't. I am real worried about what happens down the road. I just don't know what to look forward to.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LELAND. I might inform the gentleman from California that you know the myth about people who want handouts from the public sector, from government, has been obliterated here in the city of Houston.

I recall one of the local TV stations had a job fair at the station. They advertised approximately 4,000 jobs.

Mr. HORN. 15,000 people showed up. Nearly had a riot out there.

Chairman LELAND. That is right, and they had to call in the city officials and regulate the whole thing. It is really something here. Things are getting very, very bad.

Let me thank you, Mr. Walker, for your personal statement; Mr. Horn, for your continued efforts to try to help poor people of this city. Thank you so much. It means so much to our committee for you to have come and testified.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you.

Chairman LELAND. We will now hear from Senator Hugh Parmer, Rev. David Knotts, Ms. Emily Brenner, and Ms. M.T. Di Ferrante.

I am not sure Senator Parmer has arrived yet, but I will introduce him formally when he does.

He served as the chairman of the Texas State Senate Interim Committee on Hunger. He was the principal sponsor of the Omnibus Anti-Hunger Act of 1985, which seeks to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of nutrition programs across the State.

Presently, he serves on the Intergovernmental Relations and Health and Human Services Committees and is cochairman of the Interim Special Committee on Urban Issues.

Reverend Knotts has served as executive director of Houston Metropolitan Ministries for the past 5 years. He is accompanied by Ms. Emily Brenner, legislative and advocacy coordinator of Houston Interfaith Hunger Coalition.

Ms. Brenner is involved in the training of volunteers for community service organizations in the Houston area and direct delivery of assistance for needy residents of this city.

Ms. Di Ferrante is the chief of nutrition services for the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Service. She also serves on the faculty of the University of Texas School of Allied Health and is an adjunct faculty member of the Baylor College Department of Community Medicine.

May I ask our witnesses to please come forward.

Reverend Knotts, we will ask you to begin your testimony.

STATEMENT OF REV. DAVID KNOTTS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HOUSTON METROPOLITAN MINISTRIES

Reverend KNOTTS. Thank you, Congressman.

My name is David Knotts. I am the executive director of Houston Metropolitan Ministries. Our agency operates social service programs which provide services to the elderly, youth, and to families in need. Two of our programs feed people who are in distressed circumstances.

Our Meals on Wheels Programs delivers 1,200 meals 5 days each week to homebound elderly. Most of the people we serve are low income, many of them on monthly incomes of $350 to $400 a month. The hot, nutritious meal we deliver is the only substantial meal these persons have.

In addition to weekday service, we provide special weekend service to the most needy, we perform home repairs, visitations, and health monitoring. The services we are providing in this program enable a senior adult to stay in their own home.

We provide this service at a cost of $315 per person excluding the cost of food. The reason this service is so cost effective is because we make extensive use of volunteers to provide this full range of services.

Our other hunger-related program provides nonperishable emergency food assistance to people in distress. We call this effort the BREAD Program. This is one of several activities conducted by our Hunger Coalition.

Currently we assist and coordinate the volunteer efforts at 102 sites in Houston which distribute nonperishable food to people in need. A few statistics are of interest.

When I came to Houston Metropolitan Ministries in July 1981, we were serving just over 200,000 people. We can provide food and staff services to a family of four for 5 days at a total cost of $9.

The reason we can extend such an economical service to this community is because we utilize more than 800 volunteers. The 102 sites all donate their space, and food drives are conducted by Hous-

ton's religious congregations, and our businesses and service organizations generate large quantities of donated food.

However, we are barely able to keep our heads above water. On any given day we may have as many as 25 to 35 sites that are out of food.

As Mr. Horn said, the food that recipients get lasts about 2 weeks. We have seen some dramatic changes in the people we are serving in this program.

Five years ago many people were from out-of-State who had come to look for a job in Boomtown, USA. When they were not able to find a job and ran out of money, they turned to us. The hardest hit sites were those located in a church visible from a freeway. We were feeding so many people in those days who were living in their cars that we stocked inexpensive can openers at those sites so people could open the donated canned food.

Now we are feeding an ever-increasing number of Houston's new poor. The middle-class and white people are also getting a taste of the Government bureaucracy put in place to keep people from getting Government assistance. Emily Brenner, a member of our staff, will provide more detailed information on this particular problem.

Let me conclude by saying that although we are proud of our low-cost services that feed needy people; nonprofit organization cannot meet the need alone.

The people we are serving today need more than a 3- to 5-day supply of groceries. The elderly we serve a home-delivered meal to can be served because Government picks up the cost of the meal. We can't afford that cost for 1,200 people.

Nonprofits are an important part of the service equation, but we are only part. We need Government assistance to meet the needs of people we serve now, and to help us reduce the long waiting list of people who need to be fed.

Chairman LELAND. Thank you very much.

Let me ask your colleague if she would like to comment.

STATEMENT OF EMILY F. BRENNER, LEGISLATIVE AND ADVOCACY COORDINATOR, HOUSTON INTERFAITH HUNGER COALITION

Ms. BRENNER. Yes, I would.

Thank you, Congressman Leland.

The Hunger Coalition and its parent agency, Houston Metropolitan Ministries, endorse local efforts to alleviate hunger through a network of 102 emergency food pantries. Reverend Knotts mentioned that in the past 5 years the number of pantries has doubled and the number of people served has increased by 2000 percent.

This dramatic increase is not so much attributable to the overwhelming successes of church pantries and taking care of the local hunger problem as it is to the failure of the Federal Government to respond to the crisis of hunger in America.

Food programs are not the solution to hunger. Private sector food pantries are equipped to provide one-time supplemental or emergency service to needy families.

They were never intended as a substitute or replacement for Federal food assistance.

American government has always striven to ensure that there were minimum subsistence levels for its citizens. The bread lines of the 1930's spawned a sense of urgency among some of the Nation's policymakers to see to it that Americans wouldn't be forced to go without food again.

The ideals of the Roosevelt era were again realized through the Johnson administration's great society programs.

The food and nutrition programs implemented during that time went a long way toward wiping out the extremes of hunger and poverty documented by the Field Foundation studies in 1968.

The American people fought for and won a national system that would guarantee adequate nutrition; however, in the past 5 years, American social policy has not lived up to the ideals or commitments of the previous 50.

The 1981 Omnibus Reconciliation Act was formulated with the intent of targeting the truly needy in providing food assistance.

Since that time the poverty population has increased by 4 million persons. If, in fact, the new regulations were aimed at targeting the truly needy, the number of persons receiving food stamps would have grown during this period.

It did not.

In fact, between 1984 and 1985 the number of food stamp cases in Texas dropped by 12,000. Poverty had increased by 15 percent during this same period; 80 percent of the $7 billion cuts in the Food Stamp Program between fiscal 1982 and 1985 affected Americans already living below the poverty level.

For these hungry Americans, there was no guarantee of assistance. The reemergence of soup kitchens and food pantries in cities throughout the country is a testament to the Government's failure to provide for the truly needy.

Some see the barrage of redtape within the Food Stamp Program as a conscious and deliberate attempt to limit access to it, thereby forcing it into extinction.

One Texas food stamp administrator was quoted as saying: "I am concerned about the present intent of the Food Stamp Program. It used to be to raise nutritional levels of recipients. Now it is an attempt to keep poor people from coming on the program. We must ask: Is the Federal Government trying to harass the States in order to kill the program?"

This sense of someone trying to kill the program has been echoed by food stamp officials concerned about the excessive attention given to error rates and the corresponding lack of attention to clients' rights.

According to one local food stamp administrator, "The system would be much more reasonable if the verification units designed to check up on his staff could instead be used for interviewing clients and processing the overload of applications."

Any one of these caseworkers on a given month would have a caseload of 350 families.

The attempt to cut out waste in the Food Stamp Program has also been characterized as trying to kill a fly with a sledge hammer, or scapegoating the poor.

A 1983 USDA review of quality control data concluded that 95 percent of the households receiving food stamps are eligible for

them. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for IRS tax refunds. We don't hear an uproar about that.

But when applying for food stamps, the client is assumed guilty or undeserving unless proven otherwise. The stigma factor, lack of access to food stamp offices, excessive paperwork, understaffing—of the bottom levels, misinformation and administrative errors—and I can give you many more examples from my work with these offices—these problems that currently plague the program are reflective of the current administration's attitude toward its client population, that is, talk of fraud, waste, and abuse.

Two major barriers to food stamp participation, accessibility and administration, the barrage of paperwork could be removed if eradicating hunger were again to become a priority of the Federal Government.

On the subject of shame and social stigma, June Nash of the Salem, Missouri Senior Center suggests, "Food stamps should be set up like Social Security or other similar programs, not as a charity * * *."

Yet, when you think about it, food stamps are no more or less a charity than any other Federal program. Many food stamp recipients have worked and contributed to the program with tax dollars for many years.

At the same time we classify food stamps as a handout and Social Security as something that is earned. All this is a matter of attitude. We don't blame someone for growing old, but we assign blame for being unable to feed one's family.

It is important to note that 68 percent of all food stamp recipients in Texas are children, elderly, or disabled persons.

Pregnant women, children, and the elderly are among the most vulnerable to serious health consequences that accompany prolonged hunger.

Hunger in America is a national health epidemic but is not treated as such. For years we have known that chronic undernutrition and malnutrition can cause severe impairment, both physical and mental, and can lead to premature death.

In fact, 7 of the 10 leading causes of death in Texas have been linked to nutritional deficiencies. There are 33 million Americans living below the poverty level who by definition do not have adequate resources to purchase food; they are all at-risk of nutritional deficiencies and of serious health consequences.

However, the effects of widespread hunger, including economic loss and loss of human life, have yet to be fully addressed.

Let's take the following example. We know that inadequate nutrition during pregnancy increases the likelihood of premature and low-weight births.

A low-birthweight baby is 30 times more likely to die in its first years of life than a normal weight baby.

The hospitalization costs of bringing a low-birthweight baby up to normal weight have been estimated at $15,000. Low-income and minority groups experience twice the amount of low-weight births and infant deaths than their white and middle-income counterparts.

We can only ask, is there a false economy in allowing infants to die or suffer permanent disabilities when the cost of the cure is less than the cost of the illness?

We know that every dollar spent in the WIC Program saves $3 in future medical costs, and yet, only 11 percent of the eligible women, infants, and children in Harris County benefit from this program.

Until recently, hunger has been a silent epidemic, zeroing in on the invisible poor, the perennial victims of poverty.

However, economists have begun to describe a change in the demographics of poverty. The gap between upper and lower income families is higher now than at any time since World War II.

Middle-class families are falling into poverty at an alarming rate. Spectators and the media have labeled this trend the phenomenon of the new poor.

Last year, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimated that one-quarter of the U.S. population will live in poverty for some portion of the next 10 years.

Presently there is no national policy for measuring hunger or plan for controlling it. We have no way of knowing how many hungry people there are in America because to date knowing has not been a national priority.

Yet if the health of as much as one-quarter of the population becomes threatened, hunger will become increasingly hard to ignore.

With a national plan and commitment to combat hunger, we could stop reacting to the crisis and start concentrating on prevention.

For, in a just society, food can only be thought of as a fundamental right, not as a charity or a privilege.

Chairman LELAND. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Emily Brenner appears at the conclusion of the hearing, see p. 47.]

Chairman LELAND. We are happy to see the arrival of our great senator from Fort Worth, TX, Senator Hugh Parmer.

As I mentioned earlier, Senator Parmer was chairman of the Interim Committee on Hunger for the State Legislature of Texas, and author of a great bill that was passed recently, the Omnibus Anti-Hunger Act. We certainly appreciate your participation here today, Senator.

Let me ask you to proceed in whatever way you find necessary.

STATEMENT OF HUGH PARMER, TEXAS STATE SENATOR

Mr. PARMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Congressman. Welcome to Texas.

The committee has received a written statement by me, and I won't go through and read that in detail. Rather, I will try to highlight for you some of the things which I have learned in the course of 2 years chairing a committee, a 2-year-long State senate committee inquiry into hunger and nutrition in Texas, and during the course of my activity in and in authoring and passing the act that Mr. Leland referred to.

Mr. LELAND. Without objection, your full statement will be included in the record.

Mr. PARMER. Thank you.

I would like to deal with some of the myths with respect to the existence and condition of people in this country who are hungry.

I think first of all, we have heard a few years ago the statement by members of the present administration in Washington that there were no hungry people in the United States.

Based upon findings such as those by my committee and by the Harvard Physicians Task Force and even by the President's Task Force on Food Assistance itself that was appointed to look into hunger, I think it is clear that no one any longer believes that there are no hungry people in this country.

Instead, now I read in the news media that the President of the United States believes that people are hungry only as a result of not knowing where to go to get help.

Let me assure this committee that that is—that that is no more true than the earlier statement from the same administration that there are no hungry people in America.

It is more correct to say that there are hungry people in this country because of the deliberate policy changes which the current administration in Washington has made in the manner in which nutritional programs are delivered to the people.

Two things have occurred. First, the Federal Government—and I speak specifically of those recommendations that were implemented by the administration and recognize the problems that our Members of Congress have—but first there have been massive cuts in nutritional programs such as school-run antihunger programs, school breakfasts, and more cuts are discussed under the Gramm-Rudman proposal in such things as senior assistance feeding programs and food stamps, and WIC. WIC has been exempted from Gramm-Rudman, I think.

But it is not just those actual reductions in the budget for some of these programs that has an effect on the average person out there who finds himself faced with a situation with a family to feed and no food to feed them and no resources to buy that food, but it is also administrative changes, not mandated by the Congress, but changes which have been permeated down through the Federal bureaucracy that result in the difficulty and inability of people to qualify for Federal food assistance programs, specifically in the Food Stamp Program.

Let me digress to say that is probably one of the most maligned programs, from the political point of view in the country.

Every one of us has heard stories. Every one of us knows of somebody who has driven up in some famous Cadillac to cash their food stamps.

What most people don't know is that the Food Stamp Program is required by Federal mandate. And here in Texas we annually conduct two random sample surveys.

One is a survey of people who receive food stamps, and consistently what we find is that among people receiving food stamps, between 6 and 7 percent of those people are ineligible. That ineligibility is normally for a technical reason.

Of those people fraudulently receiving food stamps, fewer than 1 percent consistently are found to be receiving food stamps from any fraudulent basis.

So, let's say a maximum of 7 percent of the people getting food stamps, for some reason, shouldn't.

On the other hand, we are also required and we do random sampling interviews of people who have applied for the Food Stamp Program and have been turned down.

What we are finding in the last couple years is that of those people applying for food stamps who have been turned down, 33 percent of them were, in fact, eligible to receive food stamps.

So, contrary to the widely held belief, the truth is that we turn away far, far more eligible needy people because of bureaucratic redtape requirements than ever get on the roles in an eligible condition.

The crime is not the few people who get on and are ineligible. The crime is the tens of thousands of Texans—and I must assume the same is true in the other States where people are eligible and in need, but because of a technical problem and redtape problem are not able to get help from the program.

I would suggest to you that Texas, in passing the omnibus hunger bill, became one of the few States—five at that time—that had taken direct action to deal with that problem.

But we shouldn't be sanguine about that, because what we did was, frankly, merely a drop in the bucket in terms of the problems that exist.

It was more symbolic than it was in addressing reality.

As regards a bill that provided approximately—which was combined State and local matching funds—$15 million to deal with the problem, the fact is at least sixfold would have been required to try and implement a policy of saying that no Texan went hungry.

As we conducted 13 hearings and heard over 300 witnesses and participated in or conducted four statewide surveys, we found that the most severe hunger problem fell into basically three categories of people in Texas.

First, there were those people who have traditionally been in the welfare cycle, if you like, people who may be for multiple generations, and their families have been impoverished and have been entrapped in a cycle of despair in which they survived only as a result of public assistance that they received.

Simply stated, and I suspect it is true in all States—that system does not provide enough for a family to regularly and consistently be able to escape hunger. It is simply—there is simply not enough resources there for a family to be fed on a consistent basis.

So, those people periodically are hungry. Perhaps they are disqualified from food stamps because they don't fill out the retrospective budgeting form correctly.

They don't have a—generally, people in the poverty areas don't have MBA's from Harvard, and if you have seen some of the forms required to be filled out nowadays by the Federal Government just to be able to keep your food stamps—they get disqualified for a month and then get back on.

In that month they have missed several days of meals or the mother and father don't eat in order that the children may. Or perhaps there are just not enough resources and by the end of the month the food stamps have run out.

So there is that 4 or 5-day period at the end of the month before the next set of stamps are available when nobody eats. Or what quite often is the case, a mother, a father, miss meals in order to take the meager resources left to see that their children have something on the table to eat.

In our study, we looked at that group and we said there is no way that we can provide, within the financial constraints that faced the State government last session and will face us this coming session in an even worse way, for all the people that fall into that category.

So we tried to address that group of people who were at greatest health risk as a result of those periodic episodes of hunger.

Working with medical professionals it was fairly easy to determine that the group at greatest health risk were children and pregnant women.

Emily cited a lot of the statistics I would have cited and are in my written testimony with regard to the danger to the child when a pregnant woman is not adequately fed.

I would add another statistic to that which is that a pregnant woman malnourished who has a low-birthweight child, we the society can anticipate that that child will have an 18 to 30 point IQ deficiency compared to the normal birth weight counterpart.

We were able to point out to the State legislature that that simply doesn't make good dollars and sense, because if you don't pay a little bit to supplement the diet of that pregnant woman, then society will pay for the result of that 18 to 30 point IQ deficiency.

We just passed a big education reform bill in Texas. If we create a subclass of intellectual students then we will simply have to pay more and more to try and get a modicum of education to those students.

We will pay because those children will likely become welfare recipients themselves, lacking the ability to do much else, and we will pay because those children will be more likely to be on the streets and committing crimes.

We will simply pay and pay and pay and pay if we don't pay a little bit up front to assist that mother to have adequate nutrition.

Early childhood development is similarly affected by malnourishment.

We found a second group in some ways more tragic than the first that suffered periodically and episodically from hunger in Texas, and that was old people.

Our studies indicated—let me back up just a second and give you some numbers, because one of the things, one criticism that those who believe hunger is a low priority make toward those of us who believe it is a high priority is they say we always talk in episodes, that our stories are episodic.

We did a survey, our committee did, with the Department of Health of women receiving WIC supplements here in Texas, and what we found in that survey was that of those women receiving the help, 33 percent of them indicated that they and their child had missed one or more meals within the last 30 days as a result of inability to get enough food.

Now, put that in perspective. There are about 900,000 women and children economically eligible to receive WIC assistance in Texas. We serve not quite a third of them.

So, let's say that somewhere in the area of 600,000 women and children are economically eligible and not receiving the program.

If a third of the people getting the help are missing meals because they can't afford enough to eat, I don't think it is a bad assumption that you could extend at least that third to the remaining 600,000 and add another 200,000 women, pregnant women, and babies who regularly miss meals in the State of Texas.

But then I spoke with the elderly. Many cases, this is even more tragic, because the problem of inadequate resources to get food is compounded often by the problem of physical frailty and the inability to prepare food even if it were there. Age takes a toll on us and more of a toll on some than others.

What we found in Texas is, we did two surveys, really, with the Department of Aging. First, a survey of people who receive congregate meals. This is the Senior Assistance Meal Program where you come into the center and have a lunch every day.

We did a survey of those receiving home delivered meals in Texas. Among the people receiving home delivered meals in Texas, better than 60 percent of them indicated that they would go hungry were it not for those meals and that they did go hungry frequently on weekends because that is a 5-day program and the meals are not provided on the weekends.

Again, you see in my formal statement the formal numbers and try to apply them to the population as a whole to get some figures to the problem.

Specifically, in Texas, we discovered that there were in 1984, late, 23,000 people on waiting lists for home delivered meals. Qualified, eligible, on waiting lists, because funds were not available.

The legislature in the omnibus bill attempted to provide enough money for both State and local matching funds, that is, to cover those 23,000 people that we knew were on waiting lists, but the Department of Aging estimated that the true unmet need in Texas for home delivered meals was 100,000.

So, again, we chipped away at the problem.

Finally, and perhaps most surprising, up until the most recent economic events in Texas, we found a group that everybody likes to call the new poor, I guess, that was experiencing problems of hunger.

Frankly, that was, if I could use an anecdote, that was an unemployed refinery worker in the Beaumont-Arthur area who had been unemployed so long that he had run out his extended unemployment benefits. A person who had always worked throughout his life and had never received welfare and really didn't believe in welfare, thought it was something that other people got, who has looked for a job and has worked for a while, mowed people's lawns, his neighbors' and colleague's lawns, worked at odd jobs, sold one of his cars, couldn't sell both because you can't get odd jobs if you can't get to the job, sold his TV set.

Why didn't he move? He can't, because every bit of capital he has is built into the equity in his house, and as there is no market for the house in an area where the unemployment rate is 17 per-

cent—and simply put, on some Saturday morning he wakes up to find, finally, there is no money, there is no food, and there is a wife and two children who are hungry.

And what does he do?

He makes his way to a Presbyterian church pantry, this proud man, and gets a $10 bag of groceries. There are a lot of them.

I can tell you that, in Texas, from 1979, when consistent policies of Democratic and Republican administrations over a decade had virtually eliminated hunger as a problem in this country, from 1979 to 1983, the requests for that kind of assistance, that bag of groceries, had gone up in Texas by 300 percent, according to a survey we did of 1,800 providers of those services.

But that is the deceptive part, because if you look at local areas, in Houston in 1979 there were 23,000 requests for assistance from families and individuals for food.

In 1979, 23,000. By 1983, the same private charities and churches received 236,000 requests for emergency food help in the city of Houston, a 1000-percent increase.

Our testimony indicated that people like the Salvation Army and emergency shelters were seeing the mixture of people coming to them for help changing from a 70-percent transient/30-percent local people ratio, to a 60-percent local people and families to 40-percent transient ratio.

So, it is not a matter of all the poor Sun Belt, cross-belters coming down here, but, in fact, it is a question of Houstonians, Texans, for the first time finding themselves having to go ask for help.

I think you get some more statistics out of the written presentation that I made to you. I just want to share these ideas and perceptions with you.

One final figure in regard to this emergency food help which largely goes to the new poor, because these people oftentimes are technically unqualified for food stamps—they don't know how to get them and don't know how to get into Federal benefit programs.

There were 74,000 private charities in 1984 around the State, and they had resources to supply only 50,000 of those requests. I was at a college reunion last weekend, and was telling that story, talking about hunger, and the wife of one of my classmates said, well, I agree with you, hunger is terrible and churches should do something about it, but not the Government.

And I said, let me tell you, if it weren't for the churches in Texas right now, we would have a hunger epidemic in this State.

They are doing everything they can, using up all the resources that they have, and there is still this gap of 230,000 people coming in or 20,000 families coming in every month asking for help and being turned away at the church door, because there is no food.

Texas tried to create a small nutrition emergency program to fill that gap on a State and local matching fund basis, and I suspect—I don't have new numbers for you, but there will be some before the next session of our legislature meeting in January, and I will be glad to forward them to the committee—but I suspect without any hesitation, I would be able to state that the problem with the declining economy in Texas has become much, much more severe than when we did our study, and that this little emergency pro-

gram that we created to fill that 20,000 gap is no doubt grossly inadequate at this point.

I would close by turning my attention north and east to the city of Washington, and suggesting to you that there is an immediate crisis with which you gentlemen can help us.

Unless the supplemental, the House version of the supplemental appropriations bill, which contains a $20 million WIC supplement offered by Congressman Coleman of Texas, is adopted as opposed to the Senate version, which does not contain the WIC amendment, unless that is adopted soon, the State of Texas before the end of the summer will be required to cut 26,000 low-income pregnant women and children from the WIC rolls in this State.

The Department of Agriculture says it is the Health Department's fault; the Health Department says it is the Department of Agriculture's fault. I don't give a damn whose fault it is. It is not the fault of the 26,000 pregnant women and maybe it is that will be cut from the rolls, and I would urge this committee to do everything in your power to see that that supplemental is passed.

I will be glad to answer any questions the committee might have. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Parmer appears at the conclusion of the hearing, see p. 50.]

Chairman LELAND. Thank you very much, Senator, for a very eloquent and moving statement.

Ms. Di Ferrante.

STATEMENT OF M.T. DI FERRANTE, CHIEF OF NUTRITION SERVICES, CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Ms. DI FERRANTE. Congressman Leland, Congressman Panetta, members of the panel, and the audience, I am M.T. Di Ferrante, as you introduced me, of the City of Houston Department of Human Services, and also here from the city department of health is Dr. Reeve. Dr. Reeve is chief of epidemiology and has been most helpful and supportive in getting together our presentation of the conditions that we will portray here today.

He and his staff have assembled the birth data we will present as we go along. How to measure hunger is the subject of countless studies and surveys. In our efforts to quantify its magnitude in the general population, we find it difficult to measure.

There are, however, several indirect measures that may relate to the topic of health and nutrition. These indirect measures focus on the health of infants. They are infant mortality and measures related to the birth weight of infants.

First slide, please.

This slide presents the number of infant deaths and the corresponding mortality rates for the three largest ethnic groups in Houston for 1984. Also listed are the most recent U.S. data from 1983 for an informal comparison.

In 1984, blacks had the highest infant mortality rate at 16.8 per 1,000 live births, or approximately 50 percent higher than either whites or Hispanics, who had infant mortality rates of less than 11

per 1,000 live births. This situation for blacks in Houston is consistent with that seen nationally.

Slide 2. This slide presents the number of low-birthweight babies and the percentage of low-weight births by ethnic group. In 1984, almost 12 percent of all black babies were of low birth weight. This was twice the percentage of either whites or Hispanics. Again, this is consistent with the national picture.

Slide 3, age distribution of mothers of low-birthweight babies:

Some would jump to the conclusion that this situation is due to births to very young teenaged mothers. This next slide presents the age distribution of mothers who delivered low-birthweight babies.

For all three of the largest ethnic groups, mothers aged 18–19 or 20–24 produced the greatest number of low-birthweight babies. Either one of these categories produced more such births than the youngest two categories combined.

Hence, efforts to reduce low-birthweight babies would be best focused on mothers 18 to 24 years of age. Efforts for females less than 18 years of age should be to educate them to postpone sexual activity or to prevent pregnancy if they are sexually active.

Slide 4, timing of prenatal visits:

When looking at birth outcome data, there is always the question of whether or not prenatal care or lack of it was a factor. On each birth certificate, there is an inquiry to the attending physician as to when prenatal care began.

As reported from the birth certificate, there is little correlation between the initiation of prenatal care and birth outcome. According to birth certificate data, Hispanics have the lowest rate of starting prenatal care in the first two trimesters and yet still have among the lowest rates of infant mortality and low-birthweight babies.

Black mothers are reported to have a higher percentage starting care in the first two trimesters, but have the highest infant mortality and greater percentage of low-birthweight babies.

Perhaps this data is flawed in that it gives no indication of the level, quality or regularity of care. We suspect that a visit to a doctor or a clinic to get advice on prenatal care does not automatically result in continued periodic prenatal care and good nutrition for the mother.

Slide 5, illegitimacy of births.

According to the State of Texas, an illegitimate birth is one where the father is not named on the birth certificate. One could therefore assume that mothers of illegitimate children do not have family or social support systems to the extent that mothers of legitimate children do.

Such support would include enough and the proper foods for adequate nutrition during pregnancy. These data suggest an association between the levels of illegitimacy and the higher infant mortality rates and greater percent of low birth weights among blacks.

Hence, these mothers might be an appropriate group on which to focus resources in an attempt to provide adequate nutritional assistance, such as our present WIC-type program.

Now, on our hunger survey, during the weeks of February 24–28 and March 3–7, 1986, a volunteer survey was taken to define the extent of hunger in our public health center user population. It

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was conducted by the staff nutritionists at six centers and the Jefferson Davis Maternity Clinic. The sample size was 346 total, or approximately 50 persons at seven sites.

Slide 6, here we have distribution of respondents by ethnic group.

This slide depicts the distribution of respondents by ethnic group—45 percent were black, 30.6 percent Hispanic, 14.5 percent white, 8.1 percent Indian-Asian, and 9 percent Asian.

Slide 7. This shows the distribution of respondents by income level—11 percent report no income; 20.5 percent reported some income, but less than $1,000. Almost 16 percent reported earning between $1,000 and $5,000, approximately 11 percent with incomes between $5,000 and $10,000 per year. Therefore, 58.1 percent of the respondents reported incomes below or near the OMB definition of the poverty level.

Next slide.

We asked the survey group "What sources of food did they use?" And if they could identify more than one source of food. Almost 24 percent reported using WIC, 32.4 percent used food stamps, and 6.4 percent relied on day care services. We must note that that is for children alone.

With personal, community, family and other resources accounting for 36.1 percent, there would appear to be a gap in sources to allay hunger.

Almost 27 percent reported eating less once or twice a week. We asked, "Are you skipping meals or eating less due to lack of money?" When combined with those who skipped meals weekly or daily, we found a total of 33.5 percent who were eating less in the past month due to lack of money.

We also asked, "Was there a difference in money available for food between this year and 1 year ago?" In March 1985, 31.1 percent did not have enough, and in the same period for 1986, 39.4 percent did not have enough food money.

In summary, the two Federal food programs, food stamps and WIC provided some supplementary food help for 56.1 percent of this population; however, the Food Stamp Program makes no allowance for the increased needs of pregnant or nursing mothers; no provision for special infant formulas and has no built-in safeguard that the food purchased will be of high nutrient density for the dollar.

Paralleling what we have heard, which is the distinct downturn in the Houston economy, is the decline in food purchasing power and a rise in the percentage of those who were eating less.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Di Ferrante appears at the conclusion of the hearing, see p. 55.]

Chairman LELAND. Thank you very much. We appreciate the graphics, they are most telling, and the testimony is excellent. Let me say that to all of you. Thank you very much.

Let me turn to my colleague from California, Mr. Panetta.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you.

First of all, all of your testimony has been excellent. I have gone to quite a few of these hearings. Even from the administration, the testimony never gets as substantive as what I just heard from this

group. I just want to commend you for the quality of testimony you have provided.

Let me ask in terms of trends, because I think trends are important. If you compare the situation in Texas a year ago with today, is the situation on the hunger front the same, or is it getting worse? How would you define the problem of hunger today as compared to, say, the previous 6 months to a year?

Mr. PARMER. Well, I don't have any new data, and so, I have to simply give opinions. I don't like to do that much. I think one of the most convincing things you can do when you talk about hunger is to try to use real numbers and develop statistical support of what you are saying.

The decline in the economy and rapid increase in the unemployment rate that has occurred since January in Texas, Congressman, suggests to me someone who has conducted a study of hunger in Texas, that the situation can only be getting worse.

The available resources from the Federal Government have not increased significantly. There was a slight increase in the base funding formula for the WIC Program, but primarily that was an inflation increase as opposed to a real numbers increase of any significance.

There has been—there has perhaps been some assistance in terms of access to the Food Stamp Program, because we adopted a 24-hour requirement for people who were in dire need of food, accelerating the 5-day expedited requirement of Federal programs.

But that is being spottily administered. It is working better in some parts of the State, and I am told not working very well down here, Congressman. I am working on that.

But it would just have to be my opinion that it would not be logical to assume anything other than a fairly significant increase in the hunger problem as a result of the decline in the economy, and increase in unemployment.

We established as you would guess—it is no secret—we established a direct relationship between instances of hunger and employment rate. I can only assume that the hunger problems has gotten even significantly worse as more people have become unemployed, and that it will get worse than that as those people are unemployed for a period of time, long enough to use up their benefits.

Some of these folks may be able to talk about numbers of people they are seeing compared to a year ago. I just don't have any new data.

Mr. PANETTA. Ms. Di Ferrante.

Ms. DI FERRANTE. We are now seeing on an individual health center basis more people who are showing the clinical signs of decreased food intake, and seeing more pregnant mothers and infants.

We see real cases of diluted formula which results in failure to gain weight and to develop as nature intended. We saw one dramatic case which stands out in my mind at the Jefferson Davis Clinic, where a mother was midway in pregnancy and when asked what her food intake was, she said, well, she only ate three times a week because then, she went to the Chinese buffet at $2.95, where you could have all you could eat, and why did she do that? The only source of income she had was to sell her blood, and they

would only let her donate the blood once a month, so she was literally giving blood and being depleted at the same time, because she didn't have replacement.

Mr. PANETTA. Do you want to comment?

Ms. BRENNER. Yes, I can answer for the Hunger Coalition. We have in the last 2 years seen a 300-percent increase in the number of people asking for our services. That doesn't include the number of people who are trying to find help, and don't get through.

For example, we have a bread line which is our hunger hotline for people to call. We did a busy study on that line a couple of months ago, and found that in any given hour, there would be 500 people calling in and getting a busy signal.

So, we now have three more phones. This will mean we will be taking in more calls, and more people calling, there will be more people waiting. It is a system where as many people as we can take will be there if we expand it further.

The fact is Reverend Knotts can tell you about some of our restraints now—due to the bad economy and lack of funds coming in—that would cause us to have to close in our program.

Our programs in the pantries are run by volunteers. We are lucky in that. Another thing I want to mention is the newest study by the Physicians' Task Force on Hunger, which indicates that while poverty has increased by 4.2 million persons over the last 5 years, the number of people receiving food stamps remains stable. There is that big gap of people who are not getting served. The physicians task force estimates that between 10 and 15 million eligible Americans are not being served.

We know the number of people who have been cut from the Food Stamp Program because of the Omnibus Reconciliation Act, 1 million persons; another 20 million families' benefits have been reduced. The majority of these people are still in need.

Reverand KNOTTS. It is interesting to note that when we started our emergency food assistance program, it was meant to be that, an emergency food assistance program, and the people that we typically served lost their welfare check or it was stolen in the mail or there was some emergency in the family, and there had been a large expenditure and folks had run out of money for food, and we came along with our program, and provided that stopgap service, if you will, to carry them over either until their check came or it was restored to them in some way.

Now, what we are doing is we are serving people who really have long-term needs. Some of our pantries have now distributed sack lunches, we have one site giving about 200 sack lunches every day to folks who need food, and we have a clientele that comes back every day, virtually, to receive that service.

We didn't—we are not set up really to provide that kind of service. We have another site that provides rice and beans once a week to elderly people, and we have now about 100 people who come regularly, low-income elderly, who don't receive any other form of subsidies than our Meals on Wheels Program, for example, and they come in and pick up rice and beans.

What started out to be an emergency assistance program here 10 years ago is now becoming a long-term service delivery, and frankly, we don't have the resources to really provide that.

We have to artificially, if you will, restrict service. The way we do that is we restrict the number of telephone lines. We could probably use an additional 10 or 15 phone lines to capture all those calls that are coming in where they now get a busy signal.

If we do that, we would increase our demands on the food. We don't have that much food. It is frustration of one type or another, it is a frustration that you can't get through on the line or it is the frustration that if you can get through, there is no food in the cupboard to provide, so to speak.

We are not the answer. We ought to be what we set out to be, a stopgap program, not a long-term feeding program. That is not our responsibility. I don't think it is.

Senator Parmer talked about churches. You know, that is a commonly held perception I think I find in Texas, the Government ought not to be in the hunger business, really the job of the churches is to provide that.

Well, fine, but you know, do churches want to take virtually all their resources and convert that into emergency food assistance? I don't think so. Not from the amount of new church construction going on in this community, unfortunately.

I don't find churches all that willing, unfortunately, as a clergyman, but I have to say that, it is tragic in some cases, but it is just the hard, cold realities of life.

Mr. PANETTA. At the Federal level, we don't build new churches, but we build new weapons systems in our case.

Reverend KNOTTS. That is right.

Mr. PANETTA. You have had almost a 1000-percent increase since you began your program.

Reverend KNOTTS. Yes.

Mr. PANETTA. Can you identify the type of clientele that is coming in now?

Reverend KNOTTS. Sure; there are some interesting points. Our statistics, I bet, show now probably roughly 35 to 40 percent of the people we serve would be in that category of the new poor.

They were not there 5 years ago. That was about the percentage of transients from out of State, if you will, that we were serving, people trying to live in their cars, et cetera. We started our emergency food assistance program in the inner-city community, we call it, inside the 610 loop in Houston, but that is roughly most of our low-income communities, certainly not all, but most of them.

That is where we started. Today, we have as many pantries outside the 610 loop as we have inside the loop, if not more, and the numbers are extremely high. We have one pantry located out here in the Spring Branch area, which is a basically white—the location is in a white, upper middle-class community.

One of the people on our staff was telling me just yesterday, last month we served 5,000 people at that site. That is incredible. Alot of those people are walk-ins. They are not coming through our phone system. But they are hearing by word of mouth that there is food there.

We distribute an enormous amount of food in the middle-class areas. One of the real problems we have now is with congregations that historically collected food in their middle-class suburban locations, sent it into a pantry location in the inner city.

We are not getting that food anymore. They are getting so many demands for food at their own church that if we get half of what we used to get, we are lucky.

We have some real what we think of as serious ethical and moral problems, if you will, within the religious community to say just wait a minute, who is my brother's keeper? You know, I am responsible for the person in my own neighborhood as I am for the person who frankly probably has less resources to go out and find, forage for food.

Emily prepared statistics the other day that are interesting, at any given hour in the 8-hour business day, there are probably at least 200 people, different people, each hour, out looking for food in this community.

That is 200 unduplicated people. They get into the process of looking for food. We are frankly overwhelmed. We are overwhelmed with what to do because of that new category of people that we now identify as the new poor, who are out looking.

Mr. PANETTA. Are these families with children?

Reverend KNOTTS. Sure; these are people whose unemployment benefits are gone, who basically have run out of services. Their problem is they have not learned how the welfare bureaucracy, if you will, works. The chronic poor people have learned that a little bit.

They are used to the shucking and jiving that goes on, and standing in lines and dealing with overworked food stamp officers, and intake workers, and other welfare workers, and these people are not used to that.

They just don't understand. It is an interesting problem to talk to people about. You know they have experienced enough of the frustration to kind of accept that, if you will.

I would hope that somewhere in that there is some energy for some political change. I am not too hopeful about it, but I would sure hope that some of those folks would begin to convert their personal experience into some political action.

Mr. PANETTA. Yes, it is interesting. I was talking to some people in the Midwest. Prolonged unemployment might almost produce a frustrated apathy.

Reverend KNOTTS. That is right.

Mr. PANETTA. This doesn't necessarily always create a reaction in the political system. People become so turned off by their own problems that they don't even want to resort to the political system at all.

That is one of the dangers to what we face here.

Reverend KNOTTS. That is quite right.

Mr. PARMER. Let me comment, if I could. It seems to me that the quality of leadership has a lot to do with the way people react. Just using the example of the Texas Department of Human Services, which runs the Food Stamp Program here in Texas, it was really clear to me when we did our committee hearings a couple years ago that the message had permeated downward through the bureaucracy that our job is to keep these bums from ripping off the Food Stamp Program, or whatever other programs we were supposed to be running.

And in no way—nobody would say that exactly, but as you took testimony from administrators, you really got that impression. Our job is to keep us from being cheated.

Mr. PANETTA. That is clear. If the States don't do that, they will get penalized.

Mr. PARMER. I have been told by people in the antihunger movement in Texas that since the passage of our bill, the world has not gotten a lot better in percentage or numbers, but one thing that got better is that at least with the bureaucracy at the State level, there is a different attitude, and people are wandering around saying, how can we feed all these folks that are hungry out there?

It strikes me that when the administration in Washington is running around saying there is nobody who is hungry, and if they are, they are too dumb to find help, that that permeates not just the bureaucracy, but to some degree the public, and alters people's attitudes.

And strange as it may seem, I think it may even affect people that are suffering from the problem to some degree—"I shouldn't be hungry," you know, "I must be doing something wrong. I am not living up to the way that I see things on television are supposed to be."

I frankly believe that things like the TV programs, the fundraising programs, Hands Across America, are very helpful in presenting a counterattitude, but I think that the attitude of the administration expressing their ideas on this problem has an effect on the body politic in the country, and its attitude.

Mr. PANETTA. I don't think there is any question about that. The impact is then that somehow, there is something wrong, if in fact that is the case. I can remember when Ed Meese made the comment about any of the evidence on hunger being simply anecdotal.

What I would like to do is take all of the Cabinet, plus the President, to the nearest soup kitchen and talk to the people there. Anybody that goes to a soup kitchen or food pantry knows that that is the last place the people that are there want to be. They would rather have a job, they would rather be working, they would rather be productive, and they don't like it any better than anybody else does.

Let me just ask you in conclusion. By virtue of the fact we are here and Mickey and I have worked at the Washington level, there is no question in our minds that when you deal with a national problem like hunger, it is a national problem and requires a partnership approach. Obviously the churches, the private sector, and State and local governments all have a role; but so does the Federal Government.

All you have to do is look at the charts to see where the principal benefits fall from. It tells you alot about if we cut those programs any more significantly, the problem would be as you said, almost epidemic in its proportions.

What are the two or three things that assuming we had the support of our colleagues on the House and Senate sides, what are two or three things you would focus principal priority on in terms of corrective legislation?

Ms. BRENNER. I would start with nutrition monitoring legislation. I think that——

Mr. PANETTA. We just passed it out of the Agriculture Committee, by the way.

Ms. BRENNER. That has been grossly overlooked. When anybody asks how many hungry people there are, or where there are questions, and there are no statistics, we always have to come back to the question: "Does anybody care to look?"

If we could monitor hunger and nutrition in the context of a central system and if we could bring together all the agencies that are responsible for taking care of the health and nutrition of Americans, then maybe, with one central policy, we would be able to better administer the programs, better understand the extent of the problem, and know about how to go about correcting it.

Within the Food Stamp Program, the numbers show a gross inadequacy. They show a grossly high amount of paperwork and redtape that could be simplified. I understand that in the 1970's, there was a single food stamp application that was standard among all States.

Today, you can go to a food stamp office and find that the application is 20 pages long. I have a quote here from someone who said: "I have given the food stamp forms to legislators, and they have been unable to complete the forms accurately."

We have to understand the problems there. The monthly reporting retrospective budgeting codes have knocked eligible people off the rolls. In some States, as many as 92 percent of the persons terminated for their reporting failure are actually eligible.

These people are being penalized because of the paperwork. They are also penalized because the monthly reporting retrospective budgeting looks back 2 months. Their income in many cases may vary and they may suffer this month for having a little bit of income 2 months ago.

The verification procedures, the status reports, and overburdens on the caseworkers have to be let up. The new bill that is being introduced will probably go a long way toward doing some of these things and also toward putting back some of the moneys that have been cut.

I think that would be a great start.

Mr. PANETTA. Yes.

Ms. DI FERRANTE. I would like to appeal to Congressman Leland, this is his home district, and he has an abiding interest in infant mortality, dating from the 1980 task force report, over and above the hunger concerns is of course the block grants to health programs.

These have been cut, and they do impact so heavily on the degree and magnitude of the services that we can deliver. Not wanting you to go away with a totally negative attitude, we would like to show you an exhibit that shows that some progress has been made in the past year that is decreasing the rates of infant mortality.

If we could have that next slide, the No. 12 slide?

The Houston residents will recognize the health centers listed here, the Casa de Amigos is over 90 percent Hispanic; the Magnolia is one of our newly combined health and multiservice centers, and it incorporates the former Canal Center and now the Ripley

Center, all from the same catchment areas. The Riverside area shows the decrease, and so on.

We thought that the health department's efforts could be compromised if further hunger is allowed to develop on an unabated basis. We would like you to keep this in mind as a parting thought that when we make progress, it is by degrees and if the support services are pulled out from under, there is going to be a slippage.

Chairman LELAND. Very good. Let me—did my colleague finish?

Mr. PANETTA. Yes.

Chairman LELAND. Ms. Di Ferrante, I have been most concerned about infant mortality rates, and how they have been affected here in Houston. Nationwide we have discovered that while there has been a decline in infant mortality, the rate of this decline has slowed down.

Is that true here, too? Do we see a definite slowing down of that decline?

Ms. DI FERRANTE. Dr. Reeve, would you address that?

Chairman LELAND. If you will just identify yourself for the record.

STATEMENT OF GORDON REEVE, M.D., BUREAU CHIEF OF EPIDEMIOLOGY, CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Dr. REEVE. Gordon Reeve, Bureau Chief of Epidemiology. We have looked at infant mortality back from 1980 to 1984, and these 1985 figures showing the health service areas are preliminary; but they will vary 1 or 2 percent from the final figures. Overall, citywide from 1980 to 1984, the infant mortality rate has remained essentially the same for many, for all the infant groups we looked at for whites, blacks, Hispanics and others, which is a mixed Asian and Indian.

We have not really seen a decline over the past 5 years. As I perhaps should point out——

Chairman LELAND. You have not seen a decline?

Dr. REEVE. We have not really seen a decline. There has been some wavering, and some noise, where it was up 1 year from 11.6 to 11.9, and then down to 11.2, but there is no consistent trend over the past 5 years at all in Houston.

I think it would be appropriate to say, too, that those figures that I have just spoken of, are from 1980 to 1984, even though Houston took a good nosedive in the early 1980's, there was a leveling of the economic crunch, and what we have seen in the past 6 months made what happened to Houston in the early 1980's, look like child's play.

We don't have any reason to be optimistic when we look at the 1986 data, 18 months from now.

Chairman LELAND. In 1979–80 we established an infant mortality task force, charged with assessing available statistical data, and recommending activities geared toward reducing, the consistently high infant mortality rates experienced in this country.

Is there a concerted effort among the county, the city, and other resources to work toward reducing such high rates, particularly in the Houston area?

Dr. REEVE. If I could raise one point, over the past 2 years under Dr. Haughton's leadership, director of the health department, established a very strong epidemiology program in the health department, so when we look in terms of limited resources, we can look at the best places to focus those resources in some of the early slides, that indicated there were certain areas in focus that would produce the greatest yield.

We can't explain why those areas need more attention than others. We are looking into those further. That process is an ongoing process so we can see where we have an effect, and where we need to focus resources.

I think someone else can speak to what is going on in the coordination.

Ms. DI FERRANTE. In the health department, we feel that there is a concerted effort between city, county, hospital district and all caregivers—in primary care particularly—to address the infant mortality rate.

This is a high, high priority of Dr. Haughton's and this has been communicated to all health providers, and any further efforts we can make on this will be a combined effort, because no one type of input seems to be the factor that changes or turns things around.

So, cooperation and a system such as we have in place, called the popras record, where we can follow the health history of those who come to the centers, and deliver at the area hospitals, and the births outcome data comes back to us, this is a great help.

Chairman LELAND. Senator Parmer, we discovered at that time there was no central bank of information about infant mortality rates in the State of Texas.

If the city health department, the Harris County Health Department, or a private voluntary organization were to seek information on infant mortality rates, there was no central bank from which to draw that information.

Has that been corrected at all?

Mr. PARMER. Congressman, I really don't know.

Dr. REEVE. There is a central bank of data in the Texas State Health Department, however, it is not analyzed and distributed and presented in the most effective manner. We have copies of the Health of Houston book that goes through not only infant mortality, but all the other things you would look at from the health department perspective.

So, as of now, we have a very good indication of what is going on with infant mortality, and low birth weights, and other types of indirect indicators that would have interest for directing health priorities.

But as far as I know, Houston, I say this modestly, is well ahead of even the State health department in being able to analyze areas where there are problems.

Chairman LELAND. Could you benefit, not just in the area of infant mortality, but other health matters as well, from information retrieved from a central bank of information from the State of Texas?

Dr. REEVE. Actually, we are subscribers to the data releases from the State health department, and we buy their morbidity-mortality

tapes, and we also participate in their infectious disease network and that system is working well.

But the shortfall in this situation if you look in areas such as Dallas or the Austin or San Antonio area, our counterparts there basically consist of one person, and there is no way that that person can take this data and put it together in any way and take care of all the other things that those epidemiologists have to take care of.

Chairman LELAND. It would be more beneficial if they could get that help from the State?

Dr. REEVE. Right.

Chairman LELAND. Very good.

Senator.

Mr. PARMER. To get back to the gentleman from California's question, Congressman, nobody is more sensitive to the problems that you have in Washington with the Federal deficit and the difficulty of getting all this money to do anything than I am.

We are sitting here facing a significant deficit in Texas with a constitutional requirement that we operate within a balanced budget. So I think we all have to deal with the questions of establishing priorities.

It seems to me that you may be able to make an argument with your colleagues that not doing something about hunger is a cost-inefficient decision. We talked earlier about the cost deficiency of providing nutrition help to women and pregnant women and children.

This same is true in terms of the elderly. You have a choice between sustaining an elderly person at home with a feeding program, or institutionalizing them, and so on.

So, it seems to me that obviously, if you could convince the colleagues you have in Congress to lower the priority of expensive strategic weapons systems and raise the priority of hungry Americans, that would be a very valuable thing.

But within the framework of what we have to operate with, I would suggest that you prioritize the people that are facing hunger as a problem, and you do that from the point of view of who is it at greatest health risk, and you attempt to deliver the resources that are available first to the people who are at greatest risk, and on up that scale until you run out of resources.

I would suggest, too, that there is just no doubt in my mind that the well-meaning effort perhaps to eliminate fraud and make sure nobody is cheating on these programs has gone just way overboard, and I am absolutely convinced that it is now costing four or five times as much as it might save in terms of reduced fraud.

So, I really believe that reversing some of those bureaucratic decisions would be cost-efficient and would produce more resources for people that need the resources.

Mr. PANETTA. Unfortunately, fraud makes a better political headline. That is the difficulty. I agree with you. From what I have seen, we ought to operate on the basis that a major manufacturer or major retailer operates on.

If a major retailer spent that much time going after the person who happened to take one article, they would go broke very quickly.

So you have to look at the general operation. That is something we have not done. We have focused so much on that one person who might ripoff the system and burden everybody else by those forms as a result.

We have now clogged the system to the point we can't even bring the person who is entitled to benefits back on board. So that needs to be turned around. You are right.

Chairman LELAND. Senator, in view of the economic downturn in the State of Texas, do you see any hope that there might be some at least incidental expansion of your antihunger legislation?

Mr. PARMER. I think it is possible, Congressman. Everybody said it couldn't be done under the economic circumstances of the last session. To some extent, getting a program started is harder than keeping it rolling, and even getting it expanded a little bit, and you couple that with the fact that I detect a real shift in attitude underway.

It is not here yet, but I think the polls that come out nationally and in Texas confirm it. I think there is a basic sense that among the voters, the people out there, that yes, there was a need to cut back on the bureaucracy, and the welfare state, or whatever you want to call it, but that what has happened in Washington has gone way too far and now it is hurting people. I don't think your average Texan wants helpless people to be hurt, so I think that the combination of those things being addressed is important.

Politically, I think people are moving toward positions that help the elderly, the poor people, and so on. I think that gives us the feeling that despite the economic situation, we can hold our own and maybe do a little more.

That is just not anywhere near adequate to really cope with the problem.

Chairman LELAND. Well, the usual reference that is brought up in discussing matters concerning the existing hunger crisis not only in this country, but in the world, is that worldwide 40,000 people a day die of malnutrition.

If there was an earthquake in Guatemala tomorrow, and 40,000 people were to die, it would make the headlines everywhere. People would flock to the support of the people of Guatemala.

The fact of the matter is that 40,000 people die every day.

It is abominable. How we translate that into political terms, I don't know. How do we get it to the American people that they need to lean on their Members of Congress, their State senators and representatives? More importantly, how do they encourage the President to change his attitude on these problems?

I don't know. Congressman Panetta and I were flying in from Washington last night and talking about sensitizing the administration. We discussed how great an event Hands Across America was. In fact, Congressman Panetta classified it as a pep rally more than anything else—a joining of all Americans in the fight to end hunger. Through this event between $30 and $50 million was raised. Yet, this is just a drop in the bucket when you consider the need.

The events that have taken place in the past, and those which will take place in the future are a dramatization of this need. In my estimation, this need must be translated into political terms.

Our Federal and State governments must provide the resources to allow the poor people in this country access to decent, nutritious food.

We are at loggerheads in the Congress. The yeoman's effort on the part of Congressman Panetta to improve benefits under the Food Stamp Program has been exemplary, but more must be done.

We just have to do what we can to sensitize the leaders of this Nation. I hope your colleagues in the State legislature will continue to support you in your efforts and in your leadership.

Mr. PARMER. Thank you. I hope so, too.

Chairman LELAND. I had more questions of the witnesses, but the time is late. We have to visit two sites before Representative Panetta has to take an airplane on to California to his district.

I want to express my appreciation to all of you for your participation, and to commend you for your efforts.

We look forward to working with you in the future through the Select Committee on Hunger, as well as Representative Panetta's Agriculture Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition. We believe your testimony has been most valuable.

Before adjourning there are some people present whom I would like to acknowledge: Vicki Bowie, chief of the nutrition services for Harris County Health Department; Dimitri McDonald, special assistant to the commissioner, Texas Department of Agriculture; Ruth Cranford, Texas Department of Human Services; Zy Weinberg, food program specialist with the Texas Department of Human Services from Austin; and Claudia Langguth, regional director for the Food Stamp Program.

We appreciate your presence here today.

With that, we would like to adjourn this hearing and move on to our site visits.

Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., the committee adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. LEON E. PANETTA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Thank you, Mickey Leland, for inviting me to Houston for this important hearing. Your statement highlights the dilemma which we face in dealing with poverty and hunger in America. Over the past two decades, we have made remarkable strides in reducing hunger and poverty in our nation. Still hunger remains a persistent and stubborn problem in our inner cities and in rural pockets of poverty. Furthermore, we have become aware over the past decade that rapid economic change can cause significant and rapid changes in the economic fortunes of millions of Americans, many of whom previously considered themselves immune from the vicissitudes of economic downturns.

We have seen as a result of the tremendous swings in oil prices since the 1973 embargo, a period of boom and then bust in the southwest, and a period a bust and painfully slow recovery in the upper-midwest. We have also seen as a result of our economic and budgetary policies, a major depression in American agriculture.

Unfortunately, for both the long-term poor and those who recently experienced unemployment and poverty, the current social welfare system is much less equipped to deal with economic downturns than just a few years ago. One example is unemployment compensation. Currently, unemployed workers in Texas are eligible for a maximum of 26 weeks of unemployment compensation. Prior to 1981, unemployed workers were eligible for up to 52 weeks of benefits in most states. Another example is Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). In Texas, as in many other States, AFDC benefits have lagged behind inflation. The lag has been so great that even through Food Stamp benefits have been indexed to the cost of food since 1972, combined Food Stamp and AFDC benefits have been declining in terms of purchasing power. Combined AFDC and Food Stamp benefits for a family of four in Texas declined 28 percent between 1972 and 1984 in terms of actual purchasing power.

What this means is that the Food Stamp program increasingly must carry a double burden. On the one hand, Food Stamps provide nutrition assistance to low-income individuals and families. But in addition, Food Stamps must also be an income supplement. Not only has inflation eroded the value of AFDC benefits, but unemployment benefits are available to fewer unemployed persons and for shorter periods than in the past.

We took steps last year for Food Stamps to pick up more of the burden. The amount of earnings of individuals trying to work their way off welfare which is not counted in determining Food Stamp benefits was increased. The amount of assets which a household can have and still receive Food Stamps was also increased.

Yet more must be done. For that reason, I am grateful for the support which Mickey Leland has given to The Hunger Relief Act of 1986 which is a 12-point plan designed to address the serious problem of hunger that remains in our society. This bill was introduced on May 21, 1986 in both the House and the Senate. Senator Kennedy sponsored the bill in the Senate. Mickey Leland and I will be having hearings on the Hunger Relief Act of 1986 in Washington later this month along with the Members from the other committees in the House that deal with nutrition legislation.

Some of the things which the bill would do to help assist those who have lost their jobs as a result of the recent downturn in the economy of Texas is an increase in the asset test for both automobiles and other assets to the levels which the President's own Task Force on Food Assistance recommended two years ago. The bill would also increase the basic Food Stamp benefit by moving toward basing benefits on the Department of Agriculture's Low-Cost plan. This proposal recognizes the fact that low-income households, like most of the rest of us, are not trained dieticians. One has to be a special combination of diet expert and very careful shopper to purchase a nutritionally adequate diet under the current Food Stamp guarantee.
This bill would also provide significant increases in Child Nutrition programs with particular emphasis on increased availability of breakfasts for children from low-income households, would increase commodity distributions through such programs as the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), and a number of other nutrition program improvements.

It will be a difficult task to get this legislation through this year. While millions of Americans have demonstrated through Hands Across America their commitment to ending hunger in our nation, we know that hard work remains for all of us if we are to eliminate the blight of hunger amidst agriculture plenty from our land. The purpose of this hearing is to solicit your views on how to get on with this task.

Prepared Statement of Don Horn, Secretary-Treasurer, Harris County AFL-CIO

This hearing today following "Hands Across America" should further demonstrate to the Reagan administration that the American people care and want some action to help the hungry, the homeless and the unemployed.

To those of us in Houston, this hearing comes at a time when our community is going through some difficult times.

Unemployment is higher now, than it has been for years -- and more layoffs and cutbacks can be anticipated.

For those getting laid-off, unfortunately, there is not much hope here in the job market.

I know, because the AFL-CIO operates a program for dislocated workers and it is difficult to find any jobs. The few there are are at the $5.00 an hour rate or less.

To compound the problem, there is precious little in the way of retraining funds for those thousands of laid-off workers. Incidentally, most of these workers are being laid-off through no fault of their own.

They are productive workers who have worked all their lives, and now, all their savings are gone and they must resort to whatever public assistance may be available.

In this transition from being self-sustaining to unemployed, there is another tragedy taking place. These people are loosing their homes which most have struggled for all their lives and with it their dignity and self respect. This is much worse than just losing your money.

Entire families are going through a nightmare, and it carries a social price of the breakup of the family unit. We see the ravages of this every day, and see the anger and frustration of people who want to work and can't find a decent job -or in most cases, any job.

For the past two years, in order to assist our own members and the others in need, our organization applied for and secured a contract with the Texas Department of Human Resources to distribute Surplus U. S. Government food supplies to those who meet the eligibility standards.

Now we have learned that the 5% of cost reimbursement for transportation and delivery of these foods, will be curtailed due to a cut back in Federal Funds.

While this will not effect our effort, it will dramatically effect most all the other groups and agencies that deliver the bulk of this food to the poor. I have discussed this problem with a number of these agencies, trying to find a solution.

I have served on the Board of the United Way for a number of years, and recently because of the layoffs the United Way expects a short fill of $3.5 million from what was pledged last year. This means at least a 9% cutback to all the United Way Agencies, while the requests for services have gone up 19%, more need, less funds.

This also is happening at a time when our city is facing severe budget cuts as is the State Government.

For the poor and the unemployed, they have no where to turn.

Through Houston Metropolitan Ministries, a United Way Agency, there is a network of church sponsored "Pantries". These are for emergency food needs. The demand on these "pantries" now is so great that many of them run out of food.

Our organization, the AFL-CIO, has cooperated with Channel 13 in their "SHARE YOUR CHRISTMAS DRIVE" each year. We provided over a hundred volunteers to help collect, sort, load and unload all the donated staples. This past Xmas, the drive was successful in getting 400,000 pounds of food donated. However, the need was so great, all the food was gone within two days.

This is further evidence of the magnitude of the problem, and is beyond the ability of the local community to meet this problem.

But then, hunger and homelessness is not a problem just in Houston, though it has become acute here because of the economy.

We are paying and will pay a heavy price for people going hungry. No not starving to death, but going hungry in a real sense, going without an adequate diet for extended periods. This price of malnutrition will show up in higher health costs, poorer educational standards for children and for the elderly, a much reduced standard of life.

You know we can measure how much it costs for food stamps and other forms of public assistance, we don't have a good way to measure the cost for people going hungry and malnourished. I suggest to you that the cost for not providing for the hungry and homeless is far greater than we can imagine.

You all need to take the message back to Washington. Feeding hungry people and housing homeless people should be a priority for our nation. The President needs to understand that most of these people want to work, but there are no jobs. Public assistance, at best, is mighty little and a person has to damn near beg to get it. He also needs to know that the magnitude of this problem is far beyond the ability of the Voluntary Agencies like the United Way, and yes, the Federal Government has a responsibility to its people and should lead the way in helping.

Something needs to happen before our society is divided by the have's and the have nots.

I hear people say over and over, we send billions to foreign nations, why can't we help at home?

A pretty good question.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF EMILY F. BRENNER, LEGISLATIVE AND ADVOCACY COORDINATOR, HOUSTON INTERFAITH HUNGER COALITION

The Hunger Coalition and its parent agency Houston Metropolitan Ministries endorse local efforts to alleviate hunger through a network of 102 emergency food panties. Over the years the program has grown from 50 pantries serving 10,999 persons in 1981 to over 100 pantries serving 204,000 persons in 1985. This dramatic increase is not so much attributable to the overwhelming successes of church pantries in taking care of the local hunger problem as to the failure of the federal government to respond to the crisis of hunger and poverty in America. **Emergency food programs are not the solution to hunger in America.** Private-sector food pantries are equiped to provide one-time supplemental or emergency assistance to needy families; they were never intended as a substitute or replacement for federal food assistance programs.

Beginning with the social reform of the New Deal, American government has striven to insure minimum subsistence levels for all of its citizens. The bread lines of the 1930's spawned a sense of urgency (among some of the nation's policy makers) to see to it that Americans would never again be forced to go without food. The ideals of the Roosevelt era were again realized through the Johnson administration's Great Society programs. The food and nutrition programs implemented during this period went a long way toward wiping out the extremes of hunger and poverty documented by the Field Foundation physicians in 1968. The American people had fought for and won a comprehensive national system that would guarantee adequate nutrition for impoverished Americans.

Broken Promises

Regrettably, though, the past five years of American social policy have not lived up to the ideals or commitments of the preceding fifty. In 1981 the Omnibus Reconciliation Act was formulated with the stated intent of targeting food assistance to the "truly needy." Since that time the poverty population has increased by 4 million persons. If in fact the new regulations were aimed at targeting the truly needy, the number of persons receiving food stamps would have grown during this period; it did not. Between 1984 and 1985, the number of food stamp caseloads in Texas dropped by 12,000. Poverty had increased by 15% during this same period. Furthermore, 80% of the 7 billion dollar cuts in the food stamp program between FY82 and 85 affected families already living below the poverty level. For these hungry Americans, there was no guarantee of assistance.

The reemergence of soup kitchens and food pantries in cities throughout this country is a testament to government's failure to provide for the truly needy. Some see the barrage of red tape within the food stamp program as a conscious and deliberate attempt to limit access to it, thereby forcing it into extinction.

One Texas food stamp administrator was quoted as saying:

> "I'm concerned about the present intent of the food stamp program. It used to be to raise nutritional levels of recipients. Now it's an attempt to keep poor people from coming on the program . . . We must ask: is the federal government trying to harrass the states in order to kill the program?"[1]

This sense of someone trying to "kill the program" is echoed by food stamp officials concerned about the excessive attention given to error rates and the corresponding lack of attention to clients' rights. According to a supervisor in a local food stamp office, the system would be much more reasonable if all of the administrators in the verification units used to check up on his staff could instead be used for interviewing clients and helping process applications.

[1] Physicians Task Force on Hunger in America, Increasing Hunger and Declining Help, Harvard School of Public Health, 1986. p.114.

An Adversarial System

The attempt to cut out waste in the food stamp program has been characterized as "trying to kill a fly with a sledge hammer" and "scapegoating the poor." A 1983 USDA review of quality control data concluded that 95% of the households receiving food stamps are eligible for them. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for IRS tax refunds. But, when applying for food stamps, the client is assumed guilty or undeserving unless proven otherwise. The stigma factor, lack of access to food stamp offices, excessive paperwork, understaffing (of the bottom levels), misinformation and administrative errors that currently plague the program are reflective of the current administration's attitude toward its client population, i.e., talk of fraud, waste and abuse. Two major barriers to food stamp participation, accessiblity and administration, could be removed if eradicatng hunger were again to become a priority of the federal government.

On the subject of shame and social stigma, June Nash of the Salem, Missouri Senior Center suggests, "food stamps should be set up like social security or other similar programs, not as a charity..."[2] Yet, when you think about it, food stamps are no more or less a "charity" than social security or any other federal program. Many food stamp recipients have worked and contributed to the program with tax dollars for many years. Why, then, do we consider food stamps "a handout" and social security something that's earned? It's purely a matter of attitude. We don't assign blame for growing old but we do assign it for being unable to feed one's family.(Lest we forget who we are talking about), it is important to note that 68% of all food stamp recipients in Texas are children, elderly or disabled persons. Pregnant women, children and the elderly are among those most vulnerable to the serious health consequences that accompany prolonged hunger.

Needless Deaths

Hunger in America is a national health epidemic but is not treated as such. For years we have known that chronic undernutrition and malnutrition can cause severe impairment, both physical and mental, and can lead to premature death. In fact, seven of the ten leading causes of death in Texas have been linked to nutritional deficiencies. There are 33 million Americans living below the poverty level who by definition do not have adequate resources to purchase food; they are all at-risk of nutritional deficiencies and of serious health consequences. However, the effects of widespread hunger, including economic loss and loss of human life, have yet to be fully addressed.

Take the following example: We know that inadequate nutrition during pregnancy increases the likelihood of premature and low weight births. A low birth weight baby is thirty times more likely to die in its first year of life than a normal weight baby. The hospitalization costs of bringing a low birth weight baby up to normal weight have been estimated at $15,000. Low-income and minority groups experience twice the amount of low weight births and infant deaths than their white and middle-income counterparts.[3] We can only ask, is there a false economy in allowing infants to die or suffer permanent disabilities when the cost of the cure is less than the cost of the illness? We know that every dollar spent in the WIC program saves three dollars in future medical costs, and yet, only 11% of the eligible women, infants and children in Harris County benefit from this program.

A National Policy

Until recently hunger has been a silent epidemic, zeroing in on the invisible poor, the perennial victims of poverty. However, economists have begun to describe a change in the demographics of poverty. The gap between upper and lower income families is higher now than at any time since World War II. Middle-class families are falling into poverty at an alarming rate. Spectators and the media have labeled this trend the phenomenon of the "new poor." Last year, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

[2]Ibid.,p.75.

[3]Texas Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition, Faces of Hunger in the Shadow of Plenty,1984 Report and Recommendations,p.15.

estimated that one quarter of the U.S. population will live in poverty for some portion of the next ten years.

Presently there is no national policy for measuring hunger or plan for controlling it. We have no way of knowing how many hungry people there are in America because to date knowing has not been a national priority. Yet if the health of as much as one quarter of the population becomes threatened, hunger will become increasingly hard to ignore. With a national plan and commitment to combat hunger, we could stop reacting to the crisis and start concentrating on prevention. For, in a just society, food can only be thought of as a fundamental right, not as a charity or a privilege.

Prepared Statement of Hugh Parmer, Texas State Senator

GOOD MORNING, I AM HUGH PARMER, CHAIRMAN OF THE TEXAS SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON HUNGER AND NUTRITION, AND I WOULD FORMALLY LIKE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO TEXAS. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TRAVELING THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES FOCUSING ON THE PROBLEM OF HUNGER AND ITS AFFECTS ON HEALTH, HOME AND FAIMILY. I BELIEVE THERE IS QUITE A LOT THAT WE CAN SHARE WITH YOU TODAY ABOUT OUR FINDINGS REGARDING THE PROBLEM OF HUNGER AND INADEQUATE NUTRITION AMONG TEXANS.

THE SENATE INTERIM COMITTEE ON HUNGER AND NUTRITION WAS CREATED LAST SUMMER AS A RESULT OF INTEREST ON THE PART OF OUR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR AND MEMBERS OF THE TEXAS SENATE, TO DETERMINE WHETHER HUNGER IS A PROBLEM IN THIS STATE, AND, IF SO, WHAT THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM IS, WHOM IT MOST SERIOUSLY AFFECTS, AND WHAT WE MIGHT DO ABOUT IT. OUR WORK HAS INCLUDED TWELVE PUBLIC HEARINGS AROUND THE STATE, WHERE WE HAVE HEARD TESTIMONY FROM MORE THAN 300 WITNESSES. EXTENSIVE DATA COLLECTION, AND SURVEYS AMONG ELDERLY, FOOD BANKS, AND EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS. WE HAVE ALSO VISITED SENIOR CITIZEN CONGREGATE MEAL SITES, SOUP KITCHENS, MISSIONS FOR THE HOMELESS, FOOD PANTRIES, FOOD BANKS, SCHOOLS, NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOMES, AND HAVE SEEN THE MANY FACES OF "HUNGER IN TEXAS".

THE MAJOR THEMES EMERGING FROM OUR RESEARCH AND HEARINGS HAVE BEEN:

THAT HUNGER IS A GROWING PROBLEM IN TEXAS AND ITS INCIDENCE HAS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY SINCE THE FIRST POLICIES AND CUTBACKS IMPOSED BY THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION IN 1981.

THAT MANY TEXANS WITH A LEGITIMATE NEED ARE BEING KEPT OFF, OR KICKED OFF FEDERALLY-FUNDED FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS BECAUSE OF BUREAUCRATIC BARRIERS AND POLICY AND PROCEDURAL CHANGES IMPLEMENTTED UNDER THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION.

THAT THE DEMAND FOR EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE IS ASTRONOMICAL AND HAS GROWN 300% ACROSS THE STATE SINCE 1980; MUCH OF THIS DEMAND HAS BEEN PLACED ON PRIVATE SECTOR AGENCIES WHICH REPORTED TO US IN A SURVEY THAT 75% OF THOSE THEY SERVE ARE FAMILIES, AND THAT THEY ARE SEEING MORE CHILDREN THAN EVER BEFORE.

THAT MORE AND MORE FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS ARE FOR THE FIRST TIME SEEKING FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR.

THAT NO SOLID NETWORK OF ASSISTANCE EXISTS IN TEXAS FOR THOSE IN NEED OF HELP.

WHILE MANY RECOGNIZE TEXAS AS A STATE OF AGRICULTURAL ABUNDANCE, POVERTY AND THE THREAT OF HUNGER NOW FACE OVER 2 MILLION CITIZENS (THE SECOND LARGEST POVERTY POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES). THERE ARE MANY IN THIS STATE WHO GO TO BED HUNGRY AT NIGHT.

THIS PARADOX OF HUNGER AND INADEQUATE NUTRITION EXPERIENCED BY ELDERLY, AND OUR POOR, IN A LAND OF PLENTY, IS ONE THAT WE CANNOT IGNORE.

THROUGHOUT OUR WORK THIS YEAR THE NEEDS OF THREE MAJOR GROUPS HAVE CONTINUALLY SURFACED: THE ELDERLY, THE "NEW POOR" AND "THE TRADITIONAL POOR". ACCORDING TO THE LAST CENSUS, THE ELDERLY IN TEXAS NUMBERED CLOSE TO 2 MILLION IN 1980 . STATEWIDE 18% (391,000) OF THOSE ELDERLY LIVE BELOW POVERTY LEVEL; IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY, 29% OF THE ELDERLY LIVE AT, OR JUST BELOW POVERTY. STATEWIDE ANOTHER 570,000 ELDERLY LIVE JUST ABOVE THE POVERTY LEVEL. THE NUMBER OF ELDERLY PERSONS WHO HAVE A HARD TIME MAKING ENDS MEET TOTALS 961,000. THE TESTIMONY WE HAVE HEARD IN ALL GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF THE STATE HAS EMPHASIZED THAT FOOD IS THE "FLEXIBLE FACTOR" THAT OFTEN IS SACRIFICED BECAUSE RENT/MORTGAGE AND UTILITY PAYMENTS TAKE PRIORITY OVER EXPENDITURES FOR FOOD.

AT A PUBLIC HEARING HERE IN HOUSTON LAST DECEMBER, WE HEARD SPECIFIC TESTIMONY REGARDING CUTBACKS IN THE PROVISION OF HOMEBOUND MEALS TO NEEDY SENIOR CITIZENS. IN ONE NEIGHBORHOOD AREA OF HOUSTON WHERE FUNDING FOR MEALS ON WHEELS HAD BEEN DISCONTINUED, A SURVEY INDICATED THAT 64 ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS STILL NEEDED FOOD ASSISTANCE AT HOME.

DUE TO THE LACK OF FUNDING, THE SERVICE WAS NOT AVAILABLE EVEN AFTER THIS SURVEY OF NEED TOOK PLACE. A FOLLOW-UP SURVEY DONE 1 1/2 YEARS LATER (WHEN THE FUNDING WAS RE-ESTABLISHED) SHOWED THAT OF THOSE 64 ELDERLY ONLY 27 WERE STILL ALIVE, AND 11 OF THESE 27 WERE IN EXTREMELY POOR HEALTH DUE TO MALNUTRITION.

TESTIMONY HEARD IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY ESTABLISHED THAT ONE NUTRITION PROVIDER CONDUCTED A RANDOM SAMPLE OF INCOME AMONG ELDERLY RECIPIENTS OF NUTRITION PROGRAMS. THE SAMPLE SHOWED SINGLE ELDERLY PERSONS LIVING ON AN AVERAGE OF $280 PER MONTH. THE TESTIMONY FROM THIS PROVIDER INDICATED THAT ONLY 15% OF THE ELIGIBLE POPULATION THAT LIVE AT OR BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL IN THE THREE COUNTY AREA WAS BEING SERVED MEALS AND THAT THE NEED FAR OUT-STRIPPED THE AVAILABLE FUNDS FOR SERVICES.

BASED ON THIS KIND OF INITIAL TESTIMONY, OUR COMMITTEE DECIDED TO CONDUCT A FORMAL SURVEY OF THE NUTRITIONAL NEEDS AMONG THE ELDERLY IN TEXAS. THE COMMITTEE WORKED COOPERATIVELY WITH OUR STATE DEPARTMENT ON AGING TO CONDUCT A SURVEY IN SEVEN GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF THE STATE, INCLUDING HOUSTON, EL PASO, AND THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY.

THE RESULTS OF THIS SURVEY, WHICH WAS CONDUCTED IN MAY AND JUNE OF THIS YEAR STRONGLY INDICATE THE CRITICAL IMPERATIVE NEED THAT IS BEING MET ONLY PARTIALLY BY THESE PROGRAMS. THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF OUR STATE DEPARTMENT ON AGING HAS RECENTLY INFORMED ME THAT WE SERVE ONLY 10.5% OF THE ELIGIBLE POPULATION.

THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED AMONG 1,752 RECIPIENTS OF BOTH CONGREGATE AND HOME-DELIVERED MEALS. STATEWIDE, 34% INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD BE HUNGRY WERE IT NOT FOR THE CONGREGATE OR HOME-DELIVERED MEAL THEY WERE GETTING THAT DAY. OF THE HOMEBOUND RESPONDENTS IN THE SURVEY, THE INFORMATION WAS EVEN MORE DRAMATIC: 62% OF THE HOMEBOUND CLIENTS SAID THEY WOULD BE HUNGRY IF THEY HAD NOT RECEIVED THE MEAL. THIRTY-FOUR PERCENT OF THE STATEWIDE RESPONDENTS SAID THAT THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY GROCERIES AFTER THEY PAY THEIR BILLS: 51% OF THE HOMEBOUND INDICATED THAT THEY EXPERIENCE THIS PROBLEM.

OVERALL, 68% OF THE RESPONDENTS RECEIVE A CONGREGATE OR HOME-DELIVERED MEAL 5 DAYS PER WEEK, AND 20% OF THE CONGREGATE RESPONDENTS AND 35% OF THE HOME-BOUND SAID THEY HAVE DIFFICULTY GETTING ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT ON THE WEEKENDS WHEN THAT MEAL IS NOT AVAILABLE. STATEWIDE 61% STATED THAT THE MEAL IS GENERALLY THEIR ONLY COMPLETE MEAL OF THE DAY.

BASED ON THIS SURVEY, THE DEPARTMENT ON AGING HAS ESTIMATED THAT OVER 100,000 MORE MEALS ARE NEEDED ON A 5 DAY PER WEEK BASIS, AND AT A MEETING OF THE DIRECOTRS OF THE 28 STATE AREA AGENCIES ON AGING LAST WEEK, THERE WAS A STRONG CONSENSUS THAT THESE NUMBERS ARE SEVERELY UNDERESTIMATED. WITH THE ADVENT OF DIAGNOSIS-RELATED GROUPS (DRG'S) IN THE AREA OF HEALTH CARE COST-CONTAINMENT AND REIMBURSEMENT, MORE AND MORE ELDERLY WILL BE SENT HOME EARLIER FROM THE HOSPITAL AND WILL NEED HOMECARE. THIS WILL INCLUDE A NEED FOR THE PROVISION OF NUTRITIONALLY ADEQUATE MEALS WHICH WILL BE VITAL TO THEIR HEALTH. ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO MEET THESE VERY LEGITIMATE NEEDS IS CRUCIAL, PARTICULARLY NOW DURING A TIME OF POLITICAL INSENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF OUR ELDERLY.

THE SECOND GROUP RECEIVING WIDESPREAD ATTENTION AS WE HAVE DISCUSSED AND RESEARCHED THE PROBLEM OF HUNGER IN TEXAS IS THE "NEW POOR". WITH THE RECESSION OF THE EARLY 1980'S, MANY TEXANS FOUND THEMSELVES WITHOUT JOBS, EXHAUSTING UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS, INELIGIBLE FOR FOOD STAMPS, AND LACKING THE KNOWLEDGE AS TO WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP. IN HOUSTON ALONE IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 21,000 PEOPLE EXHAUSTED UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS,

WHILE ANOTHER APPROXIMATELY 90,000 INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED RECEIVE NO BENEFITS WHATSOEVER. THESE PEOPLE ARE MORE DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY STATISTICALLY, BUT THEIR NUMBERS AND STORIES SHOW UP IN OTHER PLACES.

A RECENT SURVEY ON EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE CONDUCTED THROUGHOUT THIS STATE BY THIS COMMITTEE HAS REVEALED THAT IN HOUSTON ALONE LAST YEAR, OUR 190 RESPONDENTS SERVED 266,832 PEOPLE. THE RESPONDENTS WERE PRIMARILY FOOD PANTRIES AND CHURCHES. IN 1980, 142 OF THESE WERE PROVIDING EMERGENCY FOOD IN HOUSTON TO 23,472 INDIVIDUALS. IN 1983, 190 WERE PROVIDING FOOD TO 266,832 PEOPLE. THIS CONSTITUTES AN INCREASED NEED AND DEMAND OF OVER 1000% IN 3 YEARS. WHILE OUR STATEWIDE DATA INDICATED AN INCREASED DEMAND OF 300%, IN HOUSTON THE ECONOMIC RECESSION AND INFLUX OF NEW PEOPLE LOOKING FOR WORK HAVE HIT HARD - AND HIT PEOPLE WHERE THEY FEEL IT....IN THEIR BELLIES.

AS ONE WITNESS AT OUR HOUSTON PUBLIC HEARING SAID, "THE PEOPLE WE ARE HELPING IN OUR MIDDLE CLASS SUBURBAN SETTING ARE OUR NEIGHBORS, AND THEY ARE REALLY THE TYPICAL AMERICAN FAMILY." YES, HUNGER IN TEXAS HAS MANY FACES.

OF THE 1,233,907 PEOPLE REPORTED RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS IN TEXAS IN JUNE, 1984, 52% ARE CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18, 13% ARE OLD FOLKS, AND 5% ARE DISABLED. THAT TOTALS 70% OF THE FOOD STAMP CASELOAD, THIS CASELOAD IS CERTAINLY NOT FILLED WITH THOSE WHO COULD BE EARNING A LIVING.

WE HAVE MANY POOR PEOPLE LIVING IN TEXAS. OF THE "TRADITIONAL POOR", MANY ARE CHILDREN AND ELDERLY. THE INCREASING NUMBER OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS HAS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF MANY THE "FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY". TEXAS HAS A VERY HIGH DIVORCE RATE (2ND IN THE NATION) AND A HIGH RATE OF ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY (2ND IN THE NATION FOR UNMARRIED ADOLESCENTS UNDER AGE 15); BOTH THESE FACTORS AFFECT THE NUMBER OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS, MANY OF WHICH ARE POVERTY-STRICKEN.

IN TEXAS THE NUMBER OF WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN POTENTIONALLY ELIGIBLE FOR THE WIC PROGRAM TOTALS 814,177. OF THESE ELIGIBLES, ONLY 23% OF THE WOMEN, 28% OF THE INFANTS, AND 49% OF THE CHILDREN ARE SERVED. THIS CONSTITUTES A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN SERVICE OVER PREVIOUS YEARS BECAUSE TEXAS HAS RECENTLY BEEN EARMARKED AS AN EQUITY STATE, AND THEREFORE RECIEVED MORE DOLLARS; BUT THIS IS ONLY BECAUSE WE WERE SERVING SUCH A LOW PER CENT OF OUR ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN PREVIOUS YEARS. THE WIC PROGRAM HAS GROWN FROM PREVIOUSLY SERVING 13% OF THE ELIGIBLE POPULATION TO NOW WELL OVER 20%.

A SURVEY ON HUNGER CONDUCTED BY THE WIC PROGRAM IN FEBURARY OF 1984, AMONG MORE THAN 1300 RESPONDENTS IN 13 AREAS OF THE STATE, INDICATED THAT 38% OF THE OVERALL SAMPLE DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR FOOD IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR. THOSE WHO REPORTED A LACK OF MONEY ALSO INDICATED THAT MOTHER, INFANT, OR CHILD WAS SKIPPING MEALS DUE TO A LACK OF RESOURCES. A MAJORITY OF THOSE IN NEED WENT TO THEIR RELATIVES AND NEIGHBORS FOR HELP. THE LARGER THE FAMILY, THE MORE LIKELY THEY WERE TO SEEK HELP FROM AGENCIES.

OVERALL, IT IS CLEAR THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NEED EXISTS IN TEXAS FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE. WHEREAS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MADE GREAT HEADWAY IN THE 1970'S IN ASSURING THAT OUR INFANTS, YOUTH, AND ELDERLY WERE ADEQUATELY FED AND NOURISHED, IT APPEARS THAT AS A NATION WE HAVE EXPERIENCED A BACKSLIDING IN THIS CRUCIAL AREA.

WE KNOW THAT A CHILD WITH A HUNGRY BELLY CANNOT PRODUCE IN SCHOOL, AND THAT A PREGNANT WOMAN WHO DOES NOT GET APPROPRIATE NOURISHMENT IS AT RISK OF A POOR PREGNANCY OUTCOME. LET US PLEDGE TO DO THE BEST THAT WE CAN, AS A NATION, AND A STATE OF CONCERNED, COMPASSIONATE PEOPLE TO SEE THAT OUR VERY OWN ARE LIVING A MEANINGFUL AND HEALTHY EXISTENCE. GETTING ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT IS ESSENTIAL TO ASSURING THE PROSPERITY, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALL OUR FELLOW CITIZENS.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF M. T. DI FERRANTE, CHIEF OF NUTRITION SERVICES, CITY OF HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

TRENDS IN HEALTH AND HUNGER

CITY HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

How to measure hunger is the subject of countless studies and surveys. In our efforts to quantify its magnitude in the general population, we find it difficult to measure. There are, however, several indirect measures that may relate to the topic of health and nutrition. These indirect measures focus on the health of infants. They are infant mortality and measures related to low birth weight of infants.

VITAL STATISTICS BACKGROUND

Infant Mortality Rates: Slide 1

This slide presents the number of infant deaths and the corresponding mortality rates for the three largest ethnic groups in Houston for 1984. Also listed are the most recent U.S. data from 1983 for an informal comparison. In 1984 Blacks had the highest infant mortality rate at 16.8 per 1,000 live births or approximately 50% higher than either Whites or Hispanics who had infant mortality rates of less than 11 per 1000 live births. This situation for Blacks in Houston is consistent with that seen nationally.

Low Birth Weight Babies: Slide 2

This slide presents the number of low-birth weight babies and the percentage of low-weight births by ethnic group. In 1984, almost 12% of all Black babies were of low birth weight. This was twice the percentage of either Whites or Hispanics. Again this is consistent with the national picture.

Age Distribution of Mothers of Low-Birth Weight Babies: Slide 3

Some would jump to the conclusion that this situation is due to births to very young teenaged mothers. This next slide presents the age distribution of mothers who delivered low-birth weight babies. For all three of the largest ethnic groups, mothers aged 18-19 or 20-24 produced the greatest number of low-birth weight babies. Either one of these categories produced more such births than the youngest two categories combined. Hence, efforts to reduce low-birth weight babies would be best focused on mothers 18-24 years of age.

Efforts for females less than age 18 should be to educate them to postpone sexual activity or to prevent pregnancy if they are sexually active.

Timing of Prenatal Visits: Slide 4

When looking at birth outcome data, there is always the question of whether or not prenatal care or lack of it was a factor. On each birth certificate there is an inquiry to the attending physician as to when prenatal care began. As reported from the birth certificate, there is little correlation between the initiation of prenatal care and birth outcome. According to birth certificate data, Hispanics have the lowest rate of starting prenatal care in the first two trimesters and yet still have among the lowest rates for infant mortality and low-birth weight babies. Black mothers are reported to have a higher percentage starting care in the first two trimesters, but have the highest infant mortality and greatest percentage of low-birth weight babies.

Perhaps this data is flawed in that it gives no indication of the level, quality, or regularity of care. We suspect that a visit to a doctor or a clinic to get advice on prenatal care does not automatically result in continued periodic prenatal care and good nutrition for the mother.

Illegitimacy of Births by Ethnicity: Slide 5

According to the State of Texas, an illegitimate birth is one where the father is not named on the birth certificate. One could therefore assume that mothers of illegitimate children do not have family or social support systems to the extent that mothers of legitimate children do. Such support would include enough and the proper foods for adequate nutrition during pregnancy. These data suggest an association between the levels of illegitimacy and the higher infant mortality rates and greater percent of low birth weights among Blacks. Hence, these mothers might be an appropriate group on which to focus resources in an attempt to provide adequate nutritional assistance, such as WIC-type program.

HUNGER SURVEY:

During the weeks of February 24-28 and March 3-7, 1986, a volunteer survey was taken to define the extent of hunger in our Public Health Center user population. It was conducted by the staff nutritionists at six (6) Centers and the Jefferson Davis Maternity Clinic. The sample size was 346 total or approximately 50 persons at seven sites.

Distribution of Respondents by Ethnic Group: Slide 6

This slide depicts the distribution of respondents by ethnic group. Forty-five percent were Black, 30.6% Hispanic 14.5% White, 8.1% Indian/Asian and 9% Asian.

Distribution of Respondents By Income Level: Slide 7

This is the distribution of the respondents by income level. Eleven percent report no income; 20.5% reported some income but less than $1000. Almost 16% reported earning between one and five thousand, approximately 11% with incomes between five and ten thousand dollars per year. Therefore 58.1% of the respondents reported incomes below or near the O.M.B definition of the poverty level.

Food Sources: Slide 8

We asked the survey group "what sources of food did they use?" and if they could identify more than one source of food. Almost 24% used WIC, 32.4% used Food Stamps., and 6.4% relied on day care services. With personal, community, family and other resources accounting for 36.1%, there would appear to be a gap in sources to allay hunger.

Eating Less Due to Lack of Money: Slide 9

Almost 27% reported eating less once or twice a week. We asked "Are you skipping meals or eating less due to lack of money?" When combined with those

who skipped meals weekly or daily, we found a total of 33.5% who were eating less in the past month due to lack of money.

Availability of Money, this year vs. last year: Slide 10

We also asked, "was there a difference in money available for food between this year and one year ago?" In March 1985 31.1% did not have enough and in the same period 1986 -39.4% did not have enough food money.

Summary: The two federal food programs for Food Stamps and WIC provided some supplementary food help for 56.1% of this population; however, the Food Stamp program makes no allowance for the increased needs of pregnant or nursing mothers; no provision for special infant formulas and has no built in safe guard that the food purchased will be of high nutrient density for the dollar. Paralleling the distinct downturn in the Houston economy is the decline in food purchasing power and a rise in the percentage of those who were eating less.

Table 1
INFANT MORTALITY RATES* BY LARGEST ETHNIC GROUPS
Houston, Texas 1984; U.S. 1983

ETHNICITY	HOUSTON 1984 Number	HOUSTON 1984 Rate	U.S. 1983 Rate
Total**	448	11.9	10.8
White	140	10.1	9.4
Black	173	16.8	18.4
Hispanic	129	11.0	Included with U.S. Whites

*Infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
**Includes other ethnic groups

Table 2
PERCENTAGE OF LOW-WEIGHT* BIRTHS BY LARGEST ETHNIC GROUPS
Houston, Texas, 1984; U.S. 1983

ETHNICITY	HOUSTON 1984 Number	HOUSTON 1984 Percentage	U.S. 1983 Percentage
Total**	2,874	7.6%	6.8%
White	828	6.0%	5.7%
Black	1,222	11.9%	12.6%
Hispanic	699	6.0%	Included with U.S. Whites

*Low birth weight is 5 pounds 8 ounces or less
**Includes other ethnic groups

Table 3
LOW-WEIGHT BIRTHS* AMONG YOUNG MOTHERS
Number and Percentage Among All Births In Age-Group

Houston, Texas, 1984

	AGE OF MOTHER							
ETHNICITY	10-14		15-17		18-19		20-24	
Total**	22	12%	241	10%	315	9%	932	8%
White	4	20%	37	8%	51	6%	250	6%
Black	11	11%	134	14%	164	12%	413	12%
Hispanic	6	11%	68	8%	92	7%	243	6%

*Low birth weight is 5 pounds 8 ounces or less.
**Includes other ethnic groups

Table 4
PERCENTAGE OF BIRTHS BY TIME OF FIRST PRENATAL CARE*
BY LARGEST ETHNIC GROUPS

Houston, Texas, 1984

ETHNICITY	1st or 2nd Trimester	3rd Trimester	None or Unknown
White	94.0%	3.1%	2.9%
Black	92.7%	4.4%	2.9%
Hispanic	85.5%	6.4%	8.1%

* "Prenatal Care" as Recorded on Birth Certificate

Figure 5
Illegitimate Live Births as a Percentage
Of Total Live Births by Ethnicity
Houston, Texas, 1984

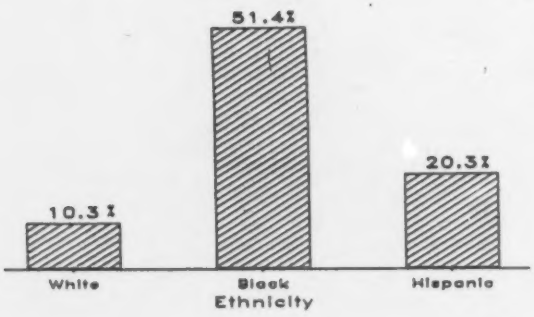


Figure 6
Ethnicity of Food Survey Respondents

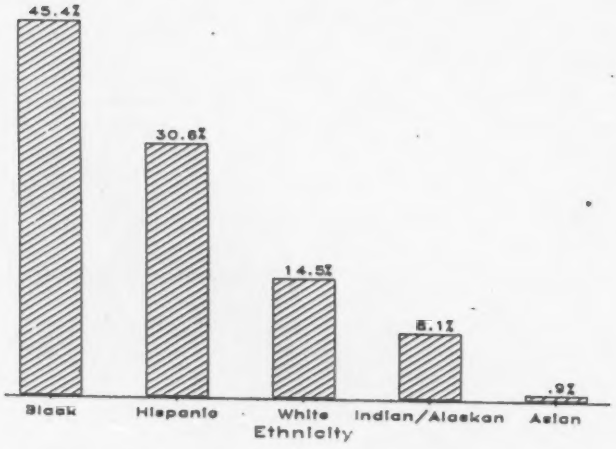


Figure 7
Annual Family Income of Food Survey Respondents

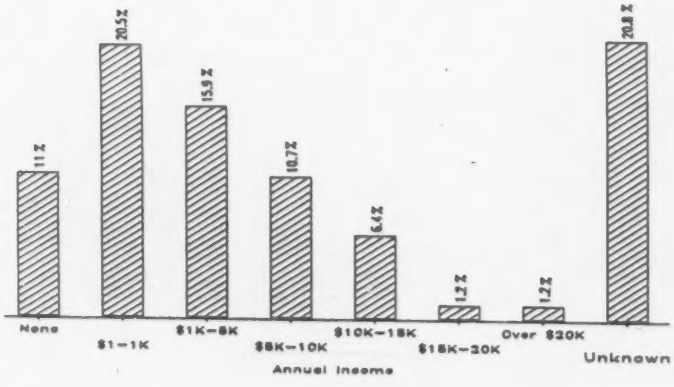
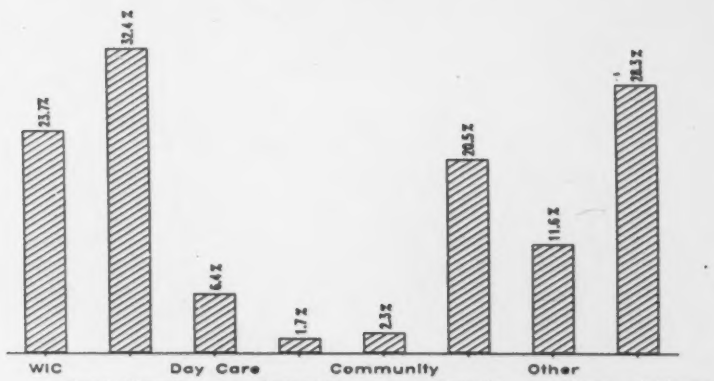


Figure 8
Sources of Food Reported by Food Survey Respondents



Percentages do not add to 100% as more than one response could be checked.

Figure 9
Frequency of Skipping Meals or Eating Less
Due to Lack of Money
Reported by Food Survey Respondents

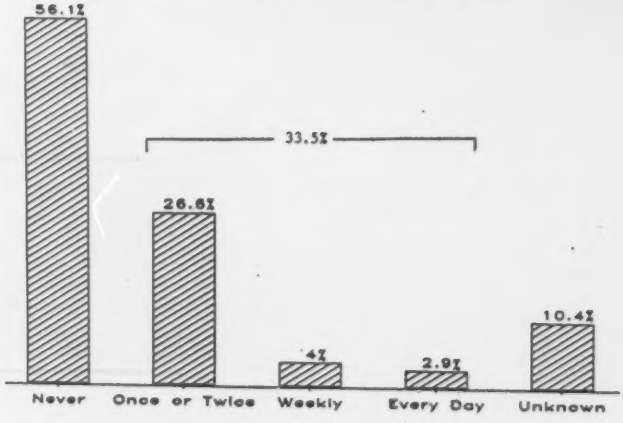
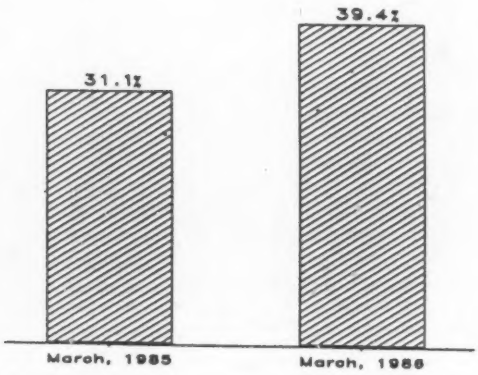


Figure 10
Nonavailability of Food Money
Reported by Food Survey Respondents



Prepared Testimony Presented by the Texas Department of Agriculture

Hunger is a growing reality throughout the State of Texas, but it is a symptom of an even larger, more complex problem --a spreading economic depression that not only is holding lower-income families down, but also is pulling middle-class families down into proverty.

The lack of adequate food is no longer just an isolated phenmenon affecting some pockets of hard-core welfare families, destitute senior citizens and a few wandering derelicts. The struggle to find enough food to meet the daily needs of the family now is a struggle that also has come into the homes of people who had no trouble putting dinner on the table in 1980. Those recently caught up in this downward spiral include people who had owned retail shops along the Mexican border, Panhandle farmers who had a positive cash flow, Gulf Coast workers earning good union wages from jobs, chemical plants, families in the Trans-Pecos who had steady work in the oil patch, and white-collar workers in big-city financial institutions.

These days, we must do more--not less--to reach out to those who do not have the income to meet basic food needs. We have proven programs that must not be short-changed--food stamps, Women-Infant-Children, school breakfast and lunch, meals-on-wheels, senior nutrition, etc. Unfortunately, the need is greater than ever.

Consider the rise in poverty rolls. In 1980, the Texas poverty percentage was 14.7 percent, which added up to some 2,141,000 people. In 1985, it has risen to 18.8 percent, or 3,032,000 people. That is a downward movement of more than 891,000 Texans in official poverty status. That's a number of newly-poor equal to the population of Dallas.

Farm families, which had no use for the food stamp program five years ago, now find themselves in personal need, yet many are ashamed to seek the help. Since 1981, about 16,000 good Texas farmers and ranchers have gone out of business. Last year, we lost them at the rate of 100 per week; this year, the American Bankers Association estimates Texas will lose 173 agricultural families each week.

With them go an entire rural economy. Forty cotton gins closed down on the South Plains of Texas in 1985. Tractor sales in Texas are off by 60 percent since 1981, and 1,200 implement dealers have shut down in towns all over Texas. Bankers, too-we lost 12 agricultural banks last year, and many, many more are on the endangered list this year.

The Texas Department of Agriculture per se is not a hunger agency. We have no line-item appropriation for fighting hunger. But there are real ways that we can contribute to this essential cause, using existing staff and resources. For example:

- o The Texas Farm Crisis Hotline is receiving over 20 calls per day from troubled farmers and ranchers, many needing immediate food assistance as well as emotional and legal assistance. These callers are being referred to food stamp offices and food providers where necessary.

- o TDA will distribute a list of food banks and emergency food providers to area commodity organizations and food processors to encourage donations of both raw and processed Texas agricultural products.

- o TDA is working with local farmers markets across the state (there should be over 45 operating this season), so the fresh produce remaining at the end of particular sales days is donated to local food banks, etc. Farmers in Waco and Fort Worth have already initiated projects in this areas.

- o TDA is working with an individual Texas farmer whose goal is to give away 30 million pounds of potatoes this year. TDA is assisting in connecting him with the food bank system.

- o TDA is working to link farmers and farmer-owned cooperatives with senior citizen nutrition centers.

- o TDA can work with the Texas A& M Extension Service and private groups like Austin Community Gardens to develop a network of community gardens across the state.

In the Houston area, TDA is working hard to see that Houston consumers, including the poor, have access to the finest Texas produce. Two farmers markets have already opened in Houston, along with two area markets in Alvin and Wharton. We anticipate that a location in Houston's southside will open sometime this month.

TDA is also encouraging the organization of food buying clubs. We have produced informational materials on Cooperative Buying Clubs and recently conducted workshops on this topic in cooperation with the Houston Anti-Hunger Coalition.

Hunger is a reality in Texas, and we at TDA stand ready to work with this committee and any other appropriate agency, federal, state, or local to carry out an action plan to meet the needs we all know exist.

Prepared Presentation of Houston Welfare Rights Organization Inc.

The Houston Welfare Rights Organization urges the select committee on nutrition to maintain food stamp levels and benefits, if not increase them for insufficiencies in the thrifty food plan, and to make the following changes in food stamp legislation:

1. The elimination of monthly reporting or at least making it completely optional for states even for working families.

2. The restoration of separate food stamp households for related individuals or at least allowing separate households for such disasters as house burning, arrest, death, violence and eviction.

3. Requiring more aggressive enforcement of expedited food stamps and pilot projects.

4. Eliminating the social security number requirement at least for small children.

5. Mandating limits to verification which would prohibit welfare from writing letters to landlords in very many cases. And prohibiting intrusive questions of management except on reasonable suspicion. The local region of TDHS has asked such questions as the cost of toliet paper, laundry soap and other items of personal hygiene.

6. Finally we would ask the committee to support H.R. 25085 which would set a minimum level of AFDC and require cost of living increases. Texas pays only $184 to a family of three per month. That is less than the cost of rent alone.

7. DOCUMENTATION
In support of these proposals, we attach the following documents which suggest that the monthly reporting requirment has denied up to twenty percent of the caseload monthly, requiring massive reapplications. X1.

8. At least two units of TDHS locally could certify no more than 36.5%? of the expedited applicants within the seven day standard. X2.

9. Texas approves fewer persons for food stamps than any other state, but California. 2.85 approvals for each case denied. X3. California, of course, denies many because their AFDC and SSI benefits are so high. Note that this extremely low approval rate also exists in the AFDC program. We regard this as a measure of fairness in administration. USDA should be required to routinely publish this data.

10. There are large number of extended families in Houston because the lack of public housing, X4, has made the separate household restrictions extraordinarily burdensome. At least one federal judge in the valley has held the restriction constitutionally invalid. Castillo v. Block.

Signed: _____ Ocie B. Johnson, president 5118 Lee St. HTx 77020 (672-2869)

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Cheryl Jackson, Treas.
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Texas Department of Human Resources

State Headquarters Located at 706 Banister Lane
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2960 • Austin, Texas 78769

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February 10, 1984

Ms. Arenia Edwards
President
Houston Welfare Rights Organization
429 Neyland
Houston, Texas 77022

Dear Ms. Edwards:

Subject: Exemption of Food Stamp Families from Monthly Reporting

Thank you for your letter of January 10, 1984, which outlined your concerns about monthly reporting and retrospective budgeting. You are correct that recent legislation gives the Department of Agriculture expanded authority to waive some of the regulatory requirements regarding monthly reporting and retrospective budgeting (MRRB). Staff are currently analyzing the new options available to the state since this legislation passed so that we may decide what, if any, changes should be made to our current MRRB system. In making our decision I can assure you that minimizing the effect of MRRB on clients will be one of our primary concerns.

In your letter you listed six specific items of concern. I would like to respond individually to each of those items.

1. Currently we require households with earned income or prior work history to report monthly for the AFDC program. As we understand the MRRB legislation, it would allow the Department to have the same reporting population for food stamps (i.e., all food stamp households with earned income or prior work history) provided the Department could show that it is not cost effective to have any other households reporting monthly. At present not all food stamp households with earned income or prior work history are required to file monthly reports. If we adopted this option our initial estimates indicate that substantially more food stamp households would be required to file monthly reports than are currently required to do so. As a result, workload on Department staff would be increased and the responsibility of filing monthly reports would be extended to a greater number of food stamp households.

2. You requested that we consider exempting rural households from monthly reporting as it places a special burden on rural families who must drive greater distances to a local food stamp office to correct a lost status report. Consideration will be given to your request, however, the possibility of exemption based upon residence is remote.

3. Your letter requests that we remove a few of the questions regarding anticipated changes from our status report.

   Only the last question on the status report form deals with expected changes. The remaining questions on the form solicit only information about the client's income and circumstances as they existed for the report or budget month.

4. Your letter requests that the Department redistribute staff to provide for more equitable treatment of clients in urban areas.

   Regional management constantly assures the appropriateness of staffing levels in the various offices in a region. Short term imbalances in caseloads are unavoidable because of uneven application flows.

5. You requested that the Department publish statistics on the caseload effects of monthly reporting.

   Our statistics indicate that in the period July through December approximately 20.% of the monthly reporting caseload was denied monthly because of monthly reporting. Of the denied cases many are subsequently reinstated.

6. You requested that the Department provide you with copies of any studies or statistical data collected on the effects of MRRB.

   We are in the process of developing a plan for gathering and evaluating the effects of MRRB on our caseload. At present, there is no comprehensive written information; however, a statistical summary is attached.

Once again, I would like to express my appreciation to you for your comments.

Sincerely,

Marlin W. Johnston

Attachment

ATTACHMENT II
Caseload Information

	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Report Population - total	10,765	17,070	29,045	40,247	65,737	85,880
Not submitted (code 1)	1,345	1,915	3,098	3,956	6,757	10,355
No change (code 2)	6,728	8,070	11,665	15,458	26,475	31,073
Change (code 3)	1,290	2,771	5,441	8,111	12,592	17,672
Incomplete (code 4)	567	1,732	2,779	3,238	4,870	6,740
Late change (code 5)	636	2,015	3,599	5,015	7,403	8,347
Post c/o chg. (code 6)	199	567	2,288	3,776	6,581	9,642
Previously code 6	?	?	175	693	1,059	2,051
Periodic reporters - total				27,928	50,003	47,270
1 month				3,583	7,909	9,096
2 months				4,948	8,710	8,955
3 months				4,578	11,817	9,893
4 months				12,700	16,729	14,213
6 months				2,119	4,841	5,113
Household with reported changes	2,125 19.7%	5,353 31.4%	11,328 39.0%	16,902 42.0%	26,576 40.4%	35,661 41.5%
Computer denied households	2,004 18.6%	3,790 22.2%	6,173 21.3%	8,028 19.9%	13,059 19.9%	19,718 23.0%
Estimated number of monthly reporting related worker denials	-- --	-- --	-- --	2,312 5.7%	3,171 4.8%	4,841 5.6%
Actual number of cases which loose benefits as computed 40 days after the month of denial	unknown	unknown	1,372 8.0%	2,302 7.9%	3,020 7.5%	4,110* 6.3%

Plaintiffs' average or summary of AF-50-2 Reports. 85/03/16.

	Timely-%-of Totl-expedited-fs	Totl-other-cer'ns	Ratio-accep:denid	Ratio-machn:manul
Unit 42 Scott	459.7	83	467	23.4	1.25
Unit 65 Homestead	545.22	184.	1034	74.65	5.18
Totals	1004.92	267	1501	98.05	6.43
Unit 42 count	9	9	12	10	10
Unit 65 count	20	24	24	22	19
Total counts	29	33	36	32	29
Unt 42 Sct average	51.08	9.22	38.92	2.34	0.13
Unt 42 Hst average	27.26	7.67	43.08	3.39	0.27
Total averages	34.65	8.09	41.69	3.06	0.22

Legend: /00 means division by zero. An infinite number not added to the column sums on the summary pages.
Units 42 and 65 are the units of defendants Virginia Hill and Barbara Miller.
Note unit 42 begins taking meaningful data only from 83/12/20.
The significance of the ratio of accepted to denied is whether it meets the state average of about 3:1. It does. That of the ration of machine ATPs to manual ATPs is whether there is an abolition of manual issuance with the resultant further delay to claimants. A ratio of 1:1 would indicate such an abolition. Manuals were still issued in both units.

SUMMARY OF RF-56 REPORTS BY PLS-APPS VICTORIAN
RUN 03/15/85 UNIT 42 PAGE 1

ROM DATE	TIMELY %	OF TTL-EXPD	OFFICE	TTL-O-CERTS	RATIO-ACD:DEN	RATIO-MCH:MNL	REC	EX-PAGE
83/03/24	/00	0	SCOTT	0	/00	/00	2	X2P09
83/03/24	/00	0	SCOTT	1	/00	/00	3	X2P10
83/04/22	/00	0	SCOTT	0	/00	/00	4	2XP25
83/04/22	/00	0	SCOTT	2	/00	/00	5	2XP26
83/06/23	.00	1	SCOTT	0	.00	.00	30	X2P42
83/09/23	/00	0	SCOTT	0	/00	/00	31	2XP82
83/11/21	/00	0	SCOTT	1	/00	/00	32	2P108
83/11/21	/00	0	SCOTT	0	/00	/00	33	2P109
83/12/20	50.00	2	SCOTT	15	2.67	.00	34	2P122
83/12/20	69.23	13	SCOTT	37	5.75	.00	35	2P123
84/01/20	.00	2	SCOTT	24	1.41	.00	36	2P135
84/01/20	50.00	14	SCOTT	87	6.27	.00	37	2P136
84/02/21	100.00	1	SCOTT	54	1.57	.00	38	2P148
84/02/21	/00	0	SCOTT	0	/00	/00	39	2P149
84/02/21	45.83	24	SCOTT	99	1.75	.00	40	2P150
84/03/23	12.50	8	SCOTT	25	1.18	.00	41	2P160
84/03/23	57.14	14	SCOTT	85	1.41	.17	42	2P161
84/04/20	75.00	4	SCOTT	37	1.43	1.00	43	2P171
	459.70	83		467	23.44	1.25		

RECORDS SELECTED 18

FOOD STAMP APPROVAL RATES--IS IT SURPRISING TO KNOW THAT A FOOD STAMP APPLICANT IN TEXAS HAS A 36% CHANCE OF BEING DENIED, WHILE ONE IN WISCONSIN HAS ONLY A 3.5% CHANCE OF DENIAL? By the Houston Welfare Rights Organization, 429 Neyland St., Houston, TX 77022 (draft 5/83).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has made information on approval rates available to us which shows the startling fact above. The letter comes from Claire Lipsman of the Program Development Division in Alexandria and is dated September 23, 1982.

The usual way of measuring approval rates is by a ratio of the number of applications approved over the number denied. HHS has kept this data for many years on the AFDC program.

The national average is 7.00 approved to 1.00 denied. Texas's denial rate of 2.85 is twice the average.

The state that grants the most applications is Wisconsin with 27.22 for each denial followed by Montana, Puerto Rico, Florida and Maine.

These approval rates vary much more widely than AFDC approval rates which is unusual for a program that is supposed to be uniform over the nation.

Some sample states by rating order are! Note ten states did not report.

Rank	— state	— ratio
1.	California	2.75
2.	Texas	2.85
5.	Connecticut	3.20
6.	Massachusetts	3.45
8.	Louisiana	3.52
10.	Illinois	3.70
14.	Minnesota	4.74
15.	Kansas	4.76
16.	New Jersey	5.07
17.	Nevada	5.20
20.	Arizona	6.25
22.	Arkansas	7.14
23.	Georgia	7.27
25.	Colorado	7.93
28.	Oklahoma	8.61
29.	Indiana	8.80
32.	Tennessee	9.47
34.	Michigan	9.79
35.	Idaho	9.80
37.	Florida	14.67
38.	Puerto Rico	17.91
39.	Montana	25.70
40.	Wisconsin	27.22

AFDC ratios of accepted applications to denied ones
by Houston WRO, 429 Neyland St., HTX 77022 (85/03/29)

Low acceptance states	Ratio	Rank	accepted	denied
Texas	1.32	2	16221	12270
Nevada	0.80	1	1202	1508
Louisiana	1.54	3	6753	4378
Connecticut	1.58	4	3839	2423
Arkansas	1.71	5	3296	1922
Idahc	1.75	6	1533	874
Florida	1.80	7	15560	8622
High acceptance states				
Texas	1.32	2	16221	12270
Montana	13.64	54	1514	111
Minnesota	12.45	53	9524	765
Virgin Islands	10.08	52	121	12
Wisconsin	8.63	51	14638	1696
New York	6.53	47	43572	6675
North Carolina	5.78	45	6749	1168
Other regional states				
Mississippi	2.19	14	4299	1959
New Mexico	2.64	19	2320	880
Oklahoma	2.13	12	3940	1851

Source: HHS, SSA, Office of Policy, Quarterly Pubic Assistance Statistics 16, tb. 14 (D.C:Nov.1983)(For Oct. -Dec. 1981).

National average				
United States	2.80	21	448168	160166

Public Housing in Texas by HWRO (85/06/11)
429 Neyland St. 77022

City	Poplt̃n Tl	units	Units/T By popln
Houston	1726	17068	9.89
Dallas	944	18901	20.02
San Anto.	819	19389	23.67
El Paso	445	9665	21.72
Ft.Worth	401	4646	11.59
Austin	368	5297	14.39
Corpus C.	246	4032	16.39
Waco	104	2952	28.38
Abilene	102	625	6.13

Sources: Teague, E.E., Letter to J.Skarda (85/05/30) (Ft. Worth, USDHUD, Info. Officer) Includes public housing and sections 8, 221, 231 and 202.
1985 Stat.Abst. tb.26 (for 1982).

City	Popultn Tl-Hsing	Hsing/T By un/t
Waco	104 2952	28.38
San Anto.	819 19389	23.67
El Paso	445 9665	21.72
Dallas	944 18901	20.02
Corpus C.	246 4032	16.39
Austin	368 5297	14.39
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